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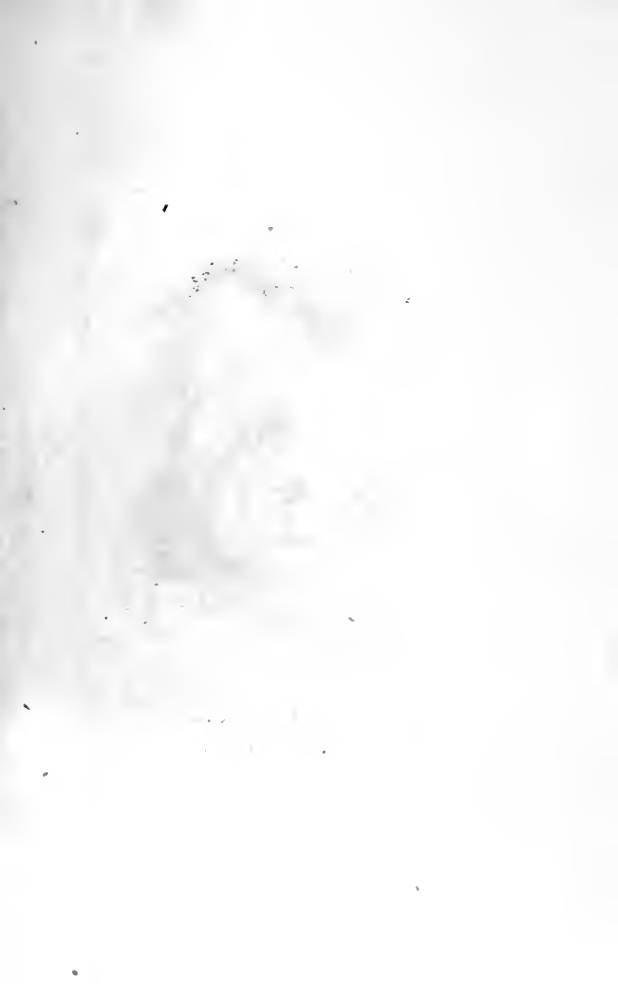
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THE  
LADY AT HOME:

OR,

LEAVES FROM THE EVERY-DAY BOOK

OF AN

AMERICAN WOMAN.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

AUTHOR OF "SWEETHEARTS AND WIVES," "KEEPING UP  
APPEARANCES," "FANNY DALE, OR A YEAR AFTER  
MARRIAGE," "INSUBORDINATION," ETC. ETC.

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## TO THE READER.

IN writing this book, the author, in order to make it both useful and interesting to the extent designed, has assumed the character of an American woman, and caused her to relate her own experience, involving the troubles, wrong doings, errors and perplexities incident to domestic life. Its aim is to lift every true woman up, by teaching her rightly to look down upon those who have been providentially placed below her, and thus lifting her up, to elevate them also.



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# THE LADY AT HOME.

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## CHAPTER I.

### JANE, MY IRISH COOK.

I WAS sitting, one day, pleasantly occupied with a new volume, when the door opened quietly, and my cook, an Irish girl, (a very excellent one, by the way,) came in, and advanced towards me. "Well, Jane, is any thing wanted?" I asked, in the mild tone in which I always endeavor to speak to my domestics.

"I should like to go out for a couple of hours, if you have no objection, Mrs. Elmwood," Jane replied, in a respectful voice. Now Jane had been out only two days before, on her regular afternoon for going, and I felt that it was hardly right for her to want two afternoons in the week. So I said, a little coldly,

"I would rather not have you go, Jane."

Her countenance fell instantly, and she turned away and left the room with a disappointed air. I was touched at this, and began to question my-

self as to the justice of what I had done. But I soon argued down my feelings by such reasonings as these. "Jane ought to know better than to ask for two afternoons in the week. The agreement was positive in regard to one, and I am surprised that she should have asked for two. The best way is to keep domestics strictly to their contracts. If you begin with granting them indulgences, they will soon claim them as a right. Then, if I were to let Jane go out to-day, Margaret would think it very hard if I did not let her go out to-morrow. No—no. I am sorry to disappoint her, but it is best to be exact in these things."

After I had settled the matter thus, or, rather, supposed that I had settled it, I resumed my book; but did not enjoy it as before. I could not drive from my imagination the disappointed look and air of Jane, as she turned from my room and went back to her place in the kitchen. Every now and then reproving thoughts would force themselves upon me so distinctly, that the words I was reading left no impression of ideas upon my mind; and I would pause, with a half breathed sigh, and review again the justice of my reasons for not granting the small request of my cook. The oftener I thus looked at them, the less was I satis-



fied with their force. Still, I could not make up my mind to withdraw my interdiction. For this would have been confessing to my domestic, that I had been wrong, and such a confession pride was not ready to make. Thus, unhappily, did the hours wear away until near dark, when Margaret, my chambermaid, came in to fill the pitcher on my wash stand with water.

"Do you know, ma'am, what is the matter with Jane?" she said, pausing at the door, as she was about leaving my room.

"Why?" I asked, while my heart smote me.

"She's been sitting down in the kitchen and crying, all the afternoon about something."

"*Sitting* and crying," I said, a momentary feeling of indignation arising quickly in my mind at the thought, that, because I would not let her go out, she had remained in idleness ever since.

"Yes, ma'am. But her work is all done. She got up very early, and was at it all the morning as hard as she could be. After dinner, all she had to do was to wash up her dishes, and this she did right away, and then cleaned her kitchen up very nice. Ever since that she has been crying about something or other—what, I am sure I don't know."

I did not reply to this, but sat thoughtful and silent. Margaret paused a moment to hear if I had any thing to say, and then left the room, and me to my no very pleasant reflections. A consciousness of having wronged Jane was not the least agreeable of these,—nor did the too constant and vivid picture upon my excited imagination of the disappointed girl sitting and crying all alone in the kitchen for some two or three hours, add much to my quiet satisfaction of mind. But the difficulty of my position was, to know how I ought to act towards her under the circumstances. It was now too late to withdraw my prohibition, for the afternoon had passed away, and could never be recalled. “I will send for Jane, and tell her I am sorry I did not grant her request,” I said to myself. But there were too many objections to this course. It involved, in the first place, a confession of wrong, and that I was not prepared to make. “Besides,” I reasoned, “what will it matter to her whether I am sorry or not, seeing that I have deprived her of an anticipated pleasure? Merely to tell her this, will be a kind of mockery to her feelings.” So I decided, at least for the time, not to say any thing to Jane in the way of apology, but to be more careful how I acted in future.

Tea was ready punctually at the usual hour, and the table as neatly set as ever. Jane looked very serious. She seemed hurt, but showed no appearance of anger, or ill feeling towards me. If she had exhibited only a little perverseness of temper, I would have had something to fall back upon. But the quiet, sober, resigned air, in which was too evident the appearance of disappointment, troubled still more deeply the waters of my spirit.

"I'm afraid I have not acted altogether right towards Jane," I said to my husband, from whom I never can conceal any thing, as we passed from the tea-room.

"How so, Mary?" he asked, looking me steadily in the face.

"She wanted me to let her go out this afternoon. But as she had been out day before yesterday, which was her regular day, I told her that she could not go. She did not say any thing at this refusal, but went back into the kitchen, where, Margaret told me, she sat and cried until near dark."

"Did you inquire why she wished to go out to-day?"

"No. And in that I was to blame. I permitted myself to feel a little unkindly at her wanting

two afternoons in the week, when our agreement was only for one, which she always had. And so I said 'no,' without hesitation or reflection. I saw in a moment, by the peculiar change in her countenance, that my cold reply was unexpected, and that she was both wounded, and disappointed. Before I had time to reflect, or question her, she turned away, and left my room."

"I'm afraid you have been somewhat to blame," my husband replied, honestly and frankly, as he always does. "But how you are to repair the wrong, I do not clearly see. The least you can do, I suppose, is, to tell Jane that she can have to-morrow afternoon, if she wishes it."

"Yes, I can do that. And I will," I said, catching at the suggestion, which afforded my mind some relief. "To-morrow will, no doubt, suit her as well."

"Perhaps it may," my husband returned, a little gravely.

"You don't think it will, then?" I said, looking into his face.

"I am sure I do not know, Mary," he smilingly replied. "It may or it may not. Cure is rarely as good as Prevention, you know."

After a little more conversation on the subject,

it was dropped, but not from my thoughts. I felt anxious for the arrival of the next day, that I might tell Jane she could have the afternoon to herself. "That will mend the matter, of course," I said. "Jane will get an extra afternoon; and the tacit confession on my part that I acted thoughtlessly in not granting her request when asked, will heal her wounded feelings."

The more I thought this over, the more clearly did I see, that to act just as my husband had proposed, would put all right again. One afternoon would be the same as another to Jane. To get out was the thing desired by her. On the next day, as my mind continued to dwell on the matter, I saw the remedy, in a clearer light, to be all that was required. And this made me feel quite comfortable again. But cook still looked sober. This I did not exactly like. And I found it hard work to keep myself from becoming a little irritated on account of it. After dinner I sent for her, in order to tell her that she might go out if she chose. She came into my room, and I said,

"Jane, you can go out *this* afternoon, if you like."

"I don't care about going out to-day, ma'am," she returned, in a respectful tone. But she did

not smile, as she had been in the habit of doing heretofore, whenever she replied to any thing I said.

“Very well, Jane, you can do as you like,” I said, a little hastily, and not in the most amicable tone of voice. The fact is, this remedy that I had built on so confidently, proved to be good for nothing, and all through the girl’s perverseness, I instantly permitted myself to think. After having repented so heartily of what I had done—after having studied for hours over the best way of repairing the wrong—and then, after having told Jane, as plainly as I could tell her, that I was sorry for my thoughtless refusal to grant her request made on the day before, to have all go for nothing, and myself thrown back to my original position, was more than I could bear.

Jane turned away as I replied, and again passed slowly from my presence, evidently wounded at my manner. And so matters had become worse instead of better. In attempting to heal the breach, I had only made it wider. But, for this, I blamed the cook’s perverse temper. It was too evident to my mind that she had become sulky. I had done all that I could do, and was not going to trouble my head any further about the matter.

This last was easily resolved, but less easily done. I was not well enough satisfied with myself to have a quiet mind. Conscience smote me for the unkind feelings I had instantly indulged, and the unkind manner in which I had spoken; and conscience is rather a troublesome guest sometimes. But I had done all I could do, I persuaded myself, towards repairing the seeming wrong to which I had subjected Jane, and was not going to make any further attempts to heal the wounds my refusal to grant her request had inflicted. By the help of a little indignation against the poor girl, and the effort to throw all the blame upon her, I managed, by tea time, to become quite indifferent. My husband's return from his store, however, soon dispelled this. Seating himself along side of me, he said—

“Mary, I have learned the reason why Jane felt so keenly your refusal to let her go out yesterday.”

“Indeed!” I ejaculated, the blood rising to my face.

“Yes. You know Michael, our porter, is her cousin. Well, he didn't come to the store to-day until after dinner. He then looked unusually serious. ‘Is any thing the matter with Jane?’ he

asked me. I said, 'nothing that I know of, why?' 'Because,' he replied, 'we all expected her yesterday afternoon, but she didn't come.' 'Why did you expect Jane?' I inquired. 'Oh, because Ellen was going away, and she was to go with us to see her off. But I haven't told you—' Michael's voice choked a little, but he recovered himself, and went on.

"My youngest sister, Ellen, who came out with us from Ireland, (you know Michael is married,) has been ailing ever since we got to this country. And more than that, has never seemed happy here. The old place was very dear to her, and she has pined to get back into the old cottage with our mother ever since. She was always her mother's favorite, and, indeed, the favorite of us all. Well, as month after month went by, Ellen grew worse and worse, both in body and mind. She never would go into company. There was but one face out of our own house that was dear to her, and that was the face of her cousin Jane, who lives with you. Every week Jane would come and spend an afternoon and evening with her—the afternoon and evening she had to herself—and these were Ellen's happiest times. She loved Jane as a sister, and



so do we all. At last Ellen grew worse and worse, and pined so to get home again, that I told her if she wished to go back to the old country, she should go. It did not take her long to make up her mind, poor thing ! To see her eye brighten, and the colour come again to her thin pale cheek, as she would talk of home, and our mother, and the joy of getting to them once more, used to melt me right down. Jane and she never talked about it, that both did not have a good hearty cry. As for me, I did not want to part with her. I loved her too well, and I felt too sure that, if she did go home, I should never see her again. And so I delayed taking her passage day after day, and week after week, until the poor girl drove me to it by saying one day, ‘ Michael, I shan’t live long, and I want my body laid in our own church-yard, close beside where little Margery lies. Do send me home, Michael ! ’ I couldn’t stand this ; and so went off and engaged her passage. The ship was to sail in a week—yesterday was the day. Jane was at our house on her usual day of coming out, and said that she would be sure and come to see her off. We all looked for her certain ; but she didn’t come. We waited, and waited, almost an hour after the time we ought to have left home

—poor Ellen was crying all the while. But no Jane came. I thought Ellen's heart would break. She loved Jane so dearly, and Jane loved her, and yet no Jane came; and she was about going away, never perhaps to meet any of us again in this world. At last we went down to the ship, still in hopes that she would meet us, even there. But no; the ship sailed, and Ellen had given to her cousin, whom she loved as a sister, no parting word, no parting embrace, no parting look—and she was going home to die!

“Michael, as manly a fellow as he is, could no longer contain his feelings. The muscles of his lips and face twitched, his voice failed him, and the tears came into his eyes, notwithstanding his evident strong effort at self-control. I explained to him, as well as I could, the reasons why Jane did not come. To these he made no reply.”

Here I burst into tears, and covering my face with my hands, actually sobbed aloud. I never felt so wretched in my life as I did at that moment. In my thoughtlessness I had done a great wrong. I had caused a deep grief to settle upon the heart of a lone Irish girl, in a strange land, that no subsequent act of mine could remove. The ship had sailed, and her dearly loved relative

had gone back to their old home, never to return, and she had not been allowed the sad privilege of a parting embrace.

"Jane ought to have told you why she wished to go out," my husband said, after a little while. "If she had only done that, all would have been right. I think she is much more to blame than you were."

But this did not silence my self-upbraidings. I could enter more deeply into a woman's feelings than he could, and therefore understood much better the state of mind in which Jane had been, and how natural it was for one of her peculiar temperament, and habit of silently bearing both mental and physical pain, and enduring without an oral murmur the severest disappointments, to shrink away at the refusal of a timid request, and bear the keenest privation rather than urge a once denied petition. But what could I now do? Nothing. Apologies would be little less than vain mockeries. They could not bring back time and events. *The ship had sailed.*

For weeks after, Jane's quiet, sober, dreamy expression of face never met my eye, without troubling the still, deep waters of my woman's heart. I strove to make some amends for what

I had done, by increased kindness of manner towards her, and by many little tokens of good will. But it was a long time before the cheerful tone of her face came back. As for me, it was a lesson I shall never forget. It taught me to be more considerate of those whose lot in life a good and wise Providence has placed below us in external things; to regard them as fellow creatures, with like affections with ourselves, and to study as carefully to be just to those below, as to those above us. I say to myself, often, when I recall the circumstance just related, that Jane was to blame for not telling me why she wished to go out; that her reasons were so urgent, that she ought at once to have stated them. But this does not satisfy me. Jane's omissions do not palliate my wrong conduct. My duty was to inquire the reason why a respectful request was made, if I had any hesitation about granting it, and yield or deny the privilege according to the force of those reasons. There was no excuse for any maladministration in my own little domain. At the head of a family, my duty was to govern in my household with mildness, forbearance, consideration, and wisdom—not bind down every member over whom I could exercise control by laws as

unvarying as those which regulate the movements of an automaton.

To an intimate female friend I one day, a few weeks after the occurrence of this incident, mentioned the whole circumstance. A little to my surprise, she smiled at my self-condemnation, and said, that no one was to blame in the slightest degree but Jane herself. For her part, she didn't believe that the girl cared a great deal about seeing her cousin, or she would have mentioned it quick enough. She had never found one of that class who was at all backward in demanding any thing reasonable, and too few of them thought of hesitating even in unreasonable matters. For a moment I felt inclined to catch hold of this suggestion, but my better thoughts quickly prevailed. Another sweeping and more unfeeling declaration in regard to domestics, let me deeper into my friend's character than I had before penetrated. She was one of those who have few sympathies with the humble poor. Alas! that there should be so many of these. And alas! that among my own gentler sex, there should exist so large a number who, as petty tyrants, rule with rods of iron all whom Providence has placed beneath them. A domestic, by these persons, is considered so far

inferior to them in mind and morals, as well as in condition, as not to be a being of like sympathies with themselves, or entitled to their consideration. Their highest duty in regard to them is to pay them regularly their wages. I know one of these "ladies," who made to some one the absurd but somewhat laughable declaration, that there was as much difference between rich and poor people, as between china and earthenware. And, what was more, she religiously believed her own assertion. Gross as were her ideas of the distinctions in human nature, there are too many who think with her, but are more cautious about expressing their opinions.

## CHAPTER II.

## MARY, THE SEWING GIRL.

THE subject of domestics, and the manner in which they are regarded by too many, recalls to my mind the remark of a gentleman in whose house I had the privilege of spending a few days, more as one of his own family than as a guest. A delicacy had been brought upon the table by way of dessert. It was a dish of early strawberries, the first of the season. The market, as yet, had but a limited supply, and the price was, of course, not very moderate. Mr. — dished out the strawberries, while his lady handed some other article of dessert to those at the table. After the strawberries had been served to all, their remained a small quantity still in the dish. One of the younger members of the family, to whose palate the delicate fruit was particularly pleasant, soon emptied her plate, and asked to be helped to some more.

“And leave none for Betty and Fanny?” said Mr. —, looking into the face of his child, with

an expression of peculiar benevolence upon his fine countenance, at the same time taking up with a spoon more than half of the berries that remained, and making a movement as if he were going to take her plate.

“Oh, no, I forgot,” said the child, quickly, while a slight blush warmed her young cheek.

As I have just said, I was, for the short time I remained with this family, more as one of them, than as a guest. There was, therefore, neither formality nor reserve in the intercourse of the different members on account of my presence.

“I make it a rule,” said Mr. —, turning towards me, as his little girl declined taking any more of the berries, “never to have any delicacy upon my table, no matter how costly it may be, without taking good care to have a portion reserved for every domestic. They enjoy these things as well as we do, and should never be forgotten.”

This was all he said upon that subject. But it was not lost upon me. In glancing back at my own conduct, I was forced to acknowledge that I had not acted, in all cases, with Mr. —’s justice and benevolence towards the humbler members of my own family. But I resolved to



let my past short comings, in this respect, suffice. And they have sufficed.

The recollection of another circumstance connected with domestics, and their treatment, comes strongly into my mind. It bears upon the subject of their inferiority to those whom a happier external condition has blessed with more of the comforts and elegancies of life. In the family of an acquaintance, I had noticed a young girl of a fair complexion, soft blue eyes, and a tall, slender, delicately formed person. She had a quiet air, and a mien of such modesty and reserve, that whenever I happened to see her, I was interested, and not unfrequently alluded to her. My friend spoke well of Mary—that was her name—and sometimes said that she did not know how she could do without her. Years passed away, and the slender girl grew up tall and graceful of stature, yet with the same modest mien that had from the first attracted my attention. At length I missed her from my friend's family, and ventured to inquire after her. To my surprise, and I must confess, disappointment, I heard Mary spoken of slightly. She had proved ungrateful for all the trouble and kindness of her benefactor, who had taken her when a child, and reared her with the

care and consideration of a mother. Just as she had become valuable to her, she had grown dissatisfied, and left her house. 'That no good would "ever come of her,"' was an opinion unhesitatingly expressed, and with, it seemed to me, too plain an indication of pleasure at the thought that Mary would not do well. 'This shocked me. It exhibited my friend in a more unamiable light than I had ever seen her. I asked where Mary had gone. But received for answer, that she neither knew nor cared. She had seen fit to go off against her express wish, and now she didn't give herself any concern about her. There is something not right here, I said to myself as I went home. Mrs. L—— could not feel as she does, if she had not wronged that poor girl in some way. It is the wronger who is generally most incensed in cases of difficulty and misunderstanding. The sufferer of wrong is usually reserved, and unless urged, rarely discloses the injustice that has been borne.

'Two or three years passed on, and I had nearly forgotten Mary, when a lady asked me early one Fall, if I did not want a good seamstress, one who understood dress-making, for a few weeks. As that was what I did want, I replied in the affirmative.

“Then I know a person who will just suit you. I have had her for three weeks, and never was so pleased with any one in my life. She will leave me on Monday next.”

“Who is she?” I asked.

“As to who she is, I really cannot say. But as to what she is, I can speak more certainly. I saw her at the house of a lady, and was so pleased with her appearance, that I made some inquiries, and found that she was highly esteemed by this lady, as a most excellent person, and a good seamstress. I did not hesitate to engage her, from this representation. She proved to be all and more than I had expected. Industrious, capable, modest, she fills her place with a quiet dignity of manner, rarely, if ever, seen in one of her station. You become attached to her involuntarily.”

“Send her to me, then, as soon as you are done with her,” I said.

This she promised to do. On the next Monday morning, about ten o'clock, a domestic came up and said that there was a person down stairs who had come to sew for me. “Tell her to come up stairs,” I replied. In a few minutes my door opened, and a tall, slender, fragile looking girl entered.

“Mary !” I said, in surprise, instantly recognizing, though she was much changed, the former domestic in my friend’s family. A flush passed over her face, and she seemed disconcerted at my tone of surprise, in which was, doubtless, something rather equivocal to her ear.

“I am really glad to see you, Mary,” I quickly added, rising and taking her hand with a warm good will. “I have heard a good account of you, and am gratified to be able to get the services of one upon whom I know I can depend as well as upon yourself. I did not know, however, that you had learned a trade, and was not aware, when I asked Mrs. —— to tell you to come and sew for me, that I was engaging my old acquaintance Mary.”

A faint, gratified smile, passed over Mary’s countenance, at this, but she made no reply. I noticed, now, that she was paler and thinner than when I last saw her—and that her pure white skin was of a peculiar transparency. Her eyes, too, were brighter, and the glow of her cheeks warmer—that is, the distinct, too well defined glow of her cheeks, contrasted strongly with the pallor of her brow, and the lower portion of her face. I felt like asking her many questions

in regard to herself; but there was, in her manner, a species of reserve that repelled inquiries of this nature. I felt that I had no right to ask questions that might call back no pleasant histories, nor warm her heart with any happy recollections.

As her business was to render me a certain service, she was soon engaged in the performance of the duties that appertained to her position in my family. In discharging these, she was quick, thorough, and conscientious. Nothing was slighted, nothing omitted, nothing lingered over a moment longer than necessary. Unless I addressed her, she rarely spoke, except to ask some question in regard to her work. She had been with me about ten days, when, one morning, Mrs. L—— dropped in. She did not wait in the parlor for me to come down, but, as we were on terms of intimacy, and as she had only a minute, as she said, to stay, came immediately up to my sitting room, where Mary was at work. As she entered, Mary turned instantly pale, and half arose, evidently under a strong internal impulse of some kind. Mrs. L—— looked surprised, and slightly confused for a moment, and without inclining her

head, or permitting a muscle of her face to relax, merely said, in a very cold tone—

“Mary”—and then turned to me, and commenced some unimportant topic of conversation. I glanced towards Mary, as she resumed her work, and saw that her hand trembled so that she with difficulty plied her needle. Mrs. L—— did not sit long. When she went away, she neither looked at nor spoke to Mary. I attended her to the door, bade her good morning, and then returned to my sitting room. My seamstress was not there. As I passed her work-basket, something glistened upon a dark cape she had been sewing upon. I looked at it closer, and saw that it was a tear!

Not more than five minutes elapsed before Mary returned and resumed her employment, but without any remark on what had passed. Her eyes were red from weeping, and, as she commenced sewing, I observed that her hand still trembled.

“There is something wrong here. What can it be?” I said to myself. “Some one is to blame. Who is it? Mary, or Mrs. L——?”

That the pale, quiet, suffering girl before me had

been guilty of any very heinous offence against Mrs. L——, I could not bring myself to believe. “It is the injurer who is most unforgiving,” I said. “The injured more readily forgive others their trespasses against them.” These thoughts were scattered by seeing the tears again falling from the poor girl’s eyes, while she still endeavoured to point her needle to the right place. I could not bear to see her thus distressed, and make no efforts to afford her relief. But what could I say? It would not be right for me to make her feel, by any thing I might utter, bound to allude to Mrs. L—— or any thing in her past life. If she wished to keep all that as a sealed book, I had no right to extort it from her. But there was one thing which I could do, and that was to make her conscious that I felt kindly towards her. So I went up to her, and laying my hand upon her, said, in a sympathizing voice—

“Mary, child, if you would like to be alone, go up to your chamber, and remain there as long as you please. You are disturbed by what has happened—do not do violence to your feelings by struggling to suppress them—let them come forth, and then you will feel better.”

She started at the touch of my hand, and the

sound of my voice, and then remained as fixed as a statue while I uttered the few words I have just written. For a moment afterwards she continued thus motionless—then the flood-gates of feeling were forced aside, and her whole frame became violently agitated, while the tears fell from her eyes like rain. I could not help sitting down beside the weeping girl, and taking her hands in mine, in token of the interest I felt in her, and my earnest desire to minister to the mental pain she was suffering. At last the storm of passion began to subside. Her body became less violently agitated—her sobs less frequent—and, finally, the fountain of tears was sealed up. Slowly turning towards me, as she regained her self-command, she looked me in the face and said—

“Forgive me, dear madam, this wild excitement. I have not always been so weak and foolish. The time was when I could control my feelings. But I am growing weaker in mind as well as in body of late. It is now more than two years since I saw Mrs. L——. You know she raised me from a little girl. She was kind to me in a good many things; and, more than that, was my protector when I had no one up to whom I could look. I became, very naturally, attached to her,



and remained and served her faithfully until I was of age. Then I wanted to learn a trade. But she did not wish to part with me. I could not bear the thought of remaining a kitchen servant, as I had been, or even of holding the relation of a domestic in any capacity. I frankly explained this to her, and she said I was getting notions above my station in life, and, if I knew when I was well off, would remain where I was. But my mind was made up. I had looked for years to the time when I should be free from service, with the fixed intention of then learning a trade; and I could not give up this intention. I, therefore, after continuing to work for her a year after I had attained my eighteenth year, gave Mrs. L—— notice that I should leave her on a certain day, for the purpose of learning a trade. From that moment her whole manner towards me changed. When I left the house, she bade me good-by in a cool, repulsive manner. Once I went back to see her, but she sent me down word that she was engaged. Twice afterwards I met her in the street, and paused involuntarily—but she passed me with a cold nod. The third time I have seen her in more than two years was this morning. You saw, yourself, her manner. And yet I am unconscious of any wrong

towards her. For seven years I served her faithfully. My conscience fully acquits me here. But because, when I arrived at an age when I was bound to judge for myself and choose for myself, I did judge and choose for myself, I have been thrown off, and treated by the only one left me in the world to love, (for I did love Mrs. L——,) as if I had committed some dreadful crime.”

“And is this all that Mrs. L—— has against you?” I asked, in surprise.

“I know of nothing else, madam. Certain it is, that in nothing have I wronged her, beyond this, if this may be called a wrong.”

Mary's relation pained and surprised me. I am always pained at witnessing or hearing of any injustice towards those who occupy the humble stations below us. That they should sometimes be unjust towards us, we can hardly wonder, for too many of them have never been instructed in the first principles of right conduct in life. They are often mere creatures of passion and impulse, and need not be cared for, and borne with, and kindly admonished as children. They are not to be judged by the strict rules we would apply to those intellectually and morally trained; although it often happens, that, among them, we find cases

of moral discipline that shine with a peculiar lustre. But when the petty selfishness of mistresses leads them to oppress and grind down the faces of domestics, I think it is truly melancholy. In this case, an honourable desire to rise above an uncongenial position in life, instead of being met with generous encouragement, was opposed, and for no other reason than because it would deprive Mrs. L—— of a valuable aid in her family. Nay, more—because this honourable desire was resolutely carried out, a poor and friendless girl was thrown off from that kind consideration which it was evident her heart yearned for as a babe for its mother's milk. Truly, facts like these it is sad to contemplate !

## CHAPTER III.

## MARY M'LEAN'S STORY.

MARY M'LEAN, my seamstress, had been with me, as I have said, about ten days, when Mrs. L—— called in, and treated her so coldly. During that time my mind had been gradually becoming more and more interested in her. Each day brought out to my attentive eye some new feature in the unobtrusive girl's character. There was a modest refinement about her manner towards me, unusual in a person situated in life as she was. There was nothing of that affected deference we so often observe in domestics, as if they were flattering our sense of superiority, nor was there any freedom of word or action. She had come into my house to render me a certain service. That service she was performing faithfully. Beyond that, she had nothing to give, and beyond her wages, she expected nothing. This seemed to be the state of her mind. If she asked or answered a question, it was with a calm, even tone. And while this was low, modest, and re-

spectful, it was perfectly free from the slightest servility.

“There is something about Mary that interests me very much,” my husband often said, during this time. “I find it hard to persuade myself that she has been for seven years, during that portion of life when the ductile character takes impressions that become hardened into permanent forms, in the kitchen as a common servant. Earlier than the period at which she came into the hands of Mrs. L——, she must have lived in a far different condition, and the remembrance of that, has doubtless kept her eye fixed on a higher mark than any at which ordinary domestics usually aim. If her history were known, I have little doubt but that it would show her to be the child of parents in a very different condition in life from the one she now occupies.”

I readily acquiesced in this. There must have been made, even much earlier than the age of eleven years, some very strong impressions upon her mind, and of a character very different from those to which, for the succeeding seven years, she had been subjected. So much for her mind and morals. Her personal appearance surprised me still more. Although for so long a time

she had been engaged in cooking, washing, and all manner of rough and hard work, her person was slender and delicate, her skin pure and white, her hand small and well made, and her carriage easy and graceful. I could hardly persuade myself that she was really the same person with the coarsely clad, but tidy little girl I had noticed for so many years in Mrs. L——'s family. It seemed impossible that any one could have passed up through a kitchen, partaking, by the way, of its severest drudgery, and not have borne its marks until the day of death. Here, however, was an exception; and a most interesting exception.

One day, while sitting in the room with her, something opened the way for me ask a few questions in regard to her early life. That she was from Ireland, I knew by her name, and a very slight modification in her pronunciation of a few words; but I preferred the question as a leading one—"You are from Ireland, I believe, Mary?" to any other.

"Yes, ma'am," was her simple reply.

"At what age did you leave there?" I added.

"I was ten years old when I was brought to this country."

“Did your parents come with you?”

“No, ma’am. They both died about a year before,”

I paused for a little while, in hopes that she would volunteer some further facts in her early history; but she remained silent, and I pursued my questions, encouraged by her unhesitating answers.

“Were they in good circumstances?” I asked.

This produced quite a change in her whole manner, and seemed to disturb her. But she was self-possessed in a moment, and replied,

“My father was a man of wealth. I can remember that we lived in a very large house, and had a great many servants,—that I always had one to go with me and wait upon me wherever I went. I was sent to school early, and had teachers before I was taken away, both in music and French. All I learned of these has, however, long since been forgotten. When my father and mother died, I was taken, with a younger sister, to the house of an uncle, where I remained for nearly a year. During that time my brother, who was a man grown, came frequently to see us, but he never seemed happy. He used to have long conversations with our uncle, during which both

would become very warm—not angry with each other, but, as it seemed, excited on the subject they were talking about. I became, at length, interested to know what their frequent disturbing conversations meant, and used to listen attentively to what they said. I soon began to perceive that it had some reference to myself and sister, and that something about property and the loss of it, was constantly alluded to. My father was a Roman Catholic, and I afterwards learned that from some government suspicion against him, or from some act of the family during the Irish rebellion, nearly all of his property had been seized and confiscated immediately after his death. The long interviews between my uncle and brother were on this subject. Efforts had been made by means of eminent counsel to procure such a representation to the proper sources, as would cause a restoration of this property so unjustly taken. But it was all in vain. Not a guinea of it ever came back to us. These particulars I afterwards learned.

“All hope of recovering our lost property having at last faded from the mind of my brother, he resolved on coming to America, and seeking his fortune in this land of promise. With about two hundred pounds in gold, all that remained to us of



very great wealth, we set sail for an unknown country. We landed at New York, and there my brother endeavored to get into business. Comfortable rooms were taken for us in a boarding-house, where we remained for several months. During the first part of this time our brother was very attentive to all our wants, and was always glad to meet us when he came home; but he gradually became less interested in us. Sometimes he did not come in all day, nor at night until we were in bed and asleep. In the mornings he was silent, and, I could see, very much troubled about something. This went on for about four months, when he told us one day that he was going to leave New York. We were all got ready hurriedly soon after, and brought to this city. Here my brother opened a little grocery and liquor store, which was frequented by a great many of our countrymen of the lower sort, who bought groceries for their families and liquors for themselves. But he was greatly changed. At home he had been one of the best of brothers, and for a short time after our arrival in New York had continued to act towards us with uniform kindness; now, however, he had become silent, gloomy, and ill-natured. He never spoke to us except to order

us to do something, or to scold us for some alleged neglect. I was required, young as I was, to wait upon customers, and to work about like a little drudge. All this I would have done cheerfully if my reward had been his smiles and kind words of approval ; but these never came. Thus matters continued for about six months, when the store was closed, and myself and sister bound out. I found an asylum in the family of Mrs. L——. My poor sister was less fortunate. The woman who took her treated her with much cruelty ; but this was not long permitted. She died with the scarlet fever in about a year.”

Mary’s voice failed her here. But she soon recovered it, and went on.

“I did not see my little sister at the time she died—nor afterwards. The disease, when it took hold of her, soon ended fatally. One Sunday afternoon, a time when I always had a few hours to myself, I went, as usual, to see Sarah. The woman with whom she lived never seemed much pleased when I came there. This time, when I went in and asked for my sister, I perceived a great change in her manner. She looked serious, and taking my hand, said, in a kind voice, “Mary, you will never see your sister again. She

died three days ago with scarlet fever !' This was a dreadful shock to me. For a little while, it seemed as if my heart had ceased to beat. I had not even known of her illness. The last time I had seen her, only a week before, she had appeared as well as usual, but she was not happy. How could she be ? Only nine years old—away from the pleasant home of childhood—separated from the sister she loved so tenderly, and compelled to work beyond her strength. And more than all this, scolded and whipped for things she couldn't help. I remember so well what passed on that Sunday afternoon. We had gone up into the garret where her hard bed was laid upon the floor, and had sat down upon it, for there was not a chair or bench in the room, with our arms around each other's necks to talk about home. The first words brought the tears from Sarah's eyes. Her heart was fuller than usual. I drew my arm tightly around her, and she laid her head down upon my shoulder and cried for a long while. 'Is there any thing the matter, sister ?' I asked. As I said this, she lifted her head, and rolling up the sleeve of her frock, pointed to several deep red marks upon her little arm. 'And they're all over my back and shoulders !' she said, sobbing bit-

terly. I did not ask what they meant. I understood too well. All I could do, was to press her with a tighter clasp to my bosom, and mingle my unavailing tears with hers. 'Last night,' she said, after some time had passed, and her tears had ceased to flow, 'I dreamed that our mother came here, and taking hold of my hand, led me away back to our home in Ireland. I was so happy! But it was only a dream! I've been thinking ever since, Mary, that I would like to die and go to her. Wouldn't you?' 'You must try and not think that way, Sarah,' I replied to this. 'But I can't help it,' she said quickly. 'If I could only die and go to my mother! Oh, sister, how happy I would then be!'

"The eager wish of her little aching heart was speedily gratified. She was taken away by Him whose ear is open to the cry of the orphan. I never saw her from that hour. Dear child! How often, lonely as I felt without a single one to love, have I thanked our Father in Heaven for taking her away from her cruel bondage. 'There was one act of kindness in the hard-hearted woman with whom my sister lived, that softened my feelings towards her. She gave me the little trunk in which Sarah kept her clothes, and in which

every thing belonging to her had been placed. I have all these still. They are to me precious relics, and, even now, I sometimes look at them until the tears run down my face.

“I learned the place where Sarah was buried. In this last act there appears to have been some little conscience at work. They did not bury her in the Potter’s field. Some excuse was made for not sending for me, on the ground that the disease was ‘*catching*,’ but it did not satisfy me. It almost broke my heart to think, that she had sickened and died thus alone with strangers, who had no regard for her. The absolute certainty of death could not have kept me away from her, my innocent minded, tender, abused little sister. But I must not talk about this. It disturbs me too much.”

I looked at Mary more intently as she said this, and perceived that her hand was trembling, her cheeks flushed, and her whole frame laboring under excitement.

“I don’t know but that I have been trespassing too far upon you all in this,” she said, after a pause. “It is the first time any one has seemed to take an interest in knowing my past history, and this

interest has betrayed me, I fear, into saying too much."

I assured her that this was not so. That I had a great desire to learn all about her, and had purposely led her on to speak of herself. But as I did not think it good for her, under her present agitated state of mind, to continue her narrative, I told her that I would be glad to hear more from her at some other time—naming the afternoon of the same day—provided nothing prevented. I then left her to herself for two or three hours, saying, as I was about going from the room—

"I would rather, Mary, that you would not, while working for me, apply yourself quite so closely as you do. It is not hard to see, that in your new calling, you are too much confined. If your health has not already suffered, it will suffer."

A silent but grateful look was the only reply she made. I then left the room, and did not return to it for two hours. But there was little of that time in which my thoughts were not upon the interesting seamstress to whose affecting history I had been listening. I felt a particular desire to learn from her exactly how Mrs. L——

had treated her during the seven years she had passed in her family. Not well, I was satisfied. And yet, if any one had insinuated that she had not done her duty by the orphan child committed to her care, it would have filled her, I doubt not, with astonishment.

## CHAPTER IV.

## CONTINUATION OF MARY M'LEAN'S STORY.

AFTER dinner I went into the room where Mary was sewing, and told her that if she felt free to do so, I would be glad to have her relate to me further, the incidents of her life, since she had come to this country. She smiled faintly and sadly, and then without hesitation, resumed where she had left off.

“The removal of my sister made me feel lost and lonely. The love I bore to her, and the deep anxiety and pain I constantly felt for her, had the effect to take me, as it were, out of myself—to cause me to think little of myself. But after she died, my heart became heavy within my bosom. There was no one to whom it could turn—there was no one for it to love. My brother had left the city and returned to New York. I wrote him a letter, as well as I could, on the Sunday after I heard of Sarah's death, and told him all about how she had been treated. But he did not get it—or, if he did, never replied to it. After



that, time passed without any change worth noticing. Mrs. L—— was kind enough in her manner towards me, and this attached me to her. But I had to work very hard. The family was large, and she kept but one other girl—of course we had to do every thing; even all the washing and ironing. I was willing, however, and this satisfied Mrs. L——. Sunday afternoon was the only leisure time I had. Then I would go up into the garret, where I slept, and sit and think of my father and mother and Sarah, who were dead—of the happy home I had once had—and then of my present hard and lonely condition. At first, these thoughts always filled my eyes with tears. I would cry for sometimes a whole hour. Then I would have a feeling that this was wrong. That my Father in Heaven knew all about me, and that he had permitted this change to take place for my good. These thoughts usually had the effect to make me get down upon my knees, and pray for a spirit of humble submission to my lot. After doing so, I always felt something warm and happy in my bosom—with a sweet peace that I cannot describe. In this way, months and years passed away. Every Sunday afternoon, I would go off alone into the garret and read some good book—

most frequently the Bible—think about my old home, and my old condition, and then, as I would grow sad, kneel down and pray for submission.

“One effect of this constant thinking about the past—of this musing over my lost home and its comforts, was to elevate my feelings above my condition. Mrs. L—— often blamed me because I kept myself, as she said, so much to myself. There were several girls about my own age, in the neighborhood, who occupied positions in other families similar to what I did in the family of Mrs. L——. These often made efforts to draw me out into associations with them. They would speak kindly to me when I met them in the street, and stop and want to talk about such matters as interested them. Sometimes, in the evening, they would come into our kitchen, and sit here for awhile, running on with their nonsense; but it didn't suit my taste at all. It was for not being on more sociable terms with these girls, that Mrs. L—— used to blame me—particularly if she by any accident happened to discover me, as she sometimes did, sitting and crying all alone by myself, while I could give her no intelligible reason for my tears,

“But I had no relish for the society of these girls. Their ideas and conversation were low;

and often vulgar, if not unchaste. Hardly ever did I listen to any one of them talk for five minutes, that something was not said at which my delicacy was shocked. No—no—I could not make companions of these. ‘Never, never will I say or do any thing to disgrace the memory of my father!’ was the unanswerable reply to all Mrs. L——’s rebukes. Not uttered for her ear, but spoken in the silence of my own thoughts. I felt that I could not make companions of the vulgar-minded, the unchaste, the impure, without becoming myself like unto my companions. And if I died in very loneliness of spirit, I was resolved to die—but not to disgrace by such low associations the memory of my father. From these resolutions I never for a single moment departed. During the long years I passed in the family of Mrs. L——, I never had but one friend of my own age and sex. She was an innocent, but rather weak-minded girl. It was for her innocence that I loved her. For about a year we were companions whenever we could meet. But, alas! Her mind began to be corrupted by just the class of girls with whom I had all along perseveringly refused to associate. She was introduced to some young men who were in no way calculated to elevate her affections. A new

world was, as it were, opened to her, in which was pleasant excitement, flattery, and extended companionship. For a time, she strove to lure me into this vortex. But I was immovable, at the same time that I tried hard to save her from its influence. My efforts, however, were in vain. There was something more congenial with such associations in her mind, than I had supposed. Gradually she ceased to come to our house, and, as a consequence, our intimacy fell off. Still I loved her, and grieved long over her blindness in choosing such companions and such delights. About four years ago, she married one of the young men with whom she associated, a shoemaker. It has turned out as I feared. He has not been able to make her a comfortable support, and what is more, has become idle and drunken. I met her a few months ago in the street, and barely recognized her, she was so changed. While we were companions, she was a round-faced, rosy-cheeked, happy-hearted girl, as neat and tidy, always, as if she were just out of a band-box. How different she looked, when I saw her after the passage of a few years ! I could not realize that the pale, thin, dejected-looking creature, with poor, soiled garments, that I held by the hand, could possibly be my old friend. But it was, alas !

too true. The former regard I had entertained for her, came back upon my heart, and melted me almost to tears. Following the impulses of my feelings, I walked with her to her home, which was a single room, in the second story of a house standing in a small, retired street. There were, in this room, three little children, as miserable in appearance as their mother. To support these, or, to make up the deficiency in their support, arising from their father's idleness, or waste of money that he earned, in drink, she had to work with her needle, in binding shoes, nearly two-thirds of her time. When I learned this, I was less surprised to find them miserably clad, and the apartment which they occupied, as comfortless and untidy as it could well be. I tried to encourage her to pay more regard to having things around her orderly and clean. But she only wept at this, and said she had no kind of heart to do any thing but keep her children from starving. That her husband drank up nearly all that he earned, and left the whole burden of every thing upon her. I found that she was quite spirit-broken. That she had no hope of ever rising to a better condition, or of doing more, if even she could succeed in that, than barely keeping her children from being hungry

and cold. I left her, I can assure you, with a sad heart. It is painful, indeed, to see the spirit of any one so broken down as to leave her no hope of rising from a low and miserable condition. Since then, I have called to see her, as a matter of duty, several times. For her children I have bought and made clothes; and also one or two comfortable dresses for herself. But there is little encouragement to do this. It only causes her worthless husband to spend more upon his vile indulgences.

“But I am wandering away from my own story, forgetful that you cannot take the same interest in one who had been my friend and companion. As I have said, I made it a matter of fixed principle not to associate with any if they were not such as were calculated to elevate rather than depress me; and in abiding by this resolution, the memory of my father and mother saved me in all temptations. My condition in Mrs. L——’s family was one in no way congenial to my feelings. The hard drudgery of a kitchen, as you may well suppose, suited not my slender body nor my mind, that was ever rising above the station I occupied, although it did not prevent me from being faithful in it. There was one person besides myself whose business it was to per-

form the various duties required of domestics. As the family was large, and we had all the washing and ironing to do, you may well suppose that we were worked pretty hard. I never objected to this, for I was always willing—and moreover, a kind and encouraging word from Mrs. L—— was always stimulant enough to keep me going from day dawn until midnight, without a murmuring word or thought. My duties were as varied as they well could be. I helped wash, iron, and cook; after I had become old enough; went through all the chambers and the parlors, and did all the marketing, both buying it and carrying it home. This last was very hard labor. We lived a long distance from the market-house, and the baskets were very heavy. I generally had to go twice. In warm weather, towards the last, I found it very severe; sometimes after I got home I would not get over the trembling that carrying two heavy baskets produced, for several hours. Once I fainted in the street, and had to be brought home.

“As I grew up tall and slender, and the time approached when I should be free from service, I began to think about the future, and myself as a woman. That I would not remain a mere house servant, was at once determined in my own mind.

I saw nothing wrong or disgraceful in it, but it did not suit my tastes and ideas at all. ‘How would my parents feel, could they see me as I now am?’ was a thought that exercised likewise a controlling influence over me. I felt it due to them to rise into a higher condition. Looking at this, I began to read more than I had done. This I could do by sitting up an hour later every night; books I obtained from Mr. L——’s library, and the newspapers, which occupied the most of my time thus devoted, were always lying about. One day a book that I was reading was missed from the library, and hearing it asked for, I said that I had it, and immediately ran to the garret and brought it down. It was Fenelon’s *Telemachus*. Mr. L—— looked at me with an expression of surprise when I handed it to him, but said nothing. After he had left the room, Mrs. L—— said that she hoped it would be the last time I took any of Mr. L——’s books up into my room—any how, she didn’t see what time I had to read books. I told her that I read at night after I had done work.

“‘Well, I can’t have that, Mary,’ she replied; ‘you will injure your health by sitting up to read at night, after you are tired with working all day, and besides, I don’t like to have candles taken up



into the garret to read by ; it is dangerous. You might fall asleep and set the house on fire.'

" 'O, no,' I urged, 'there isn't any danger at all. I never get sleepy when I have a book to read.'

" 'I can't have it, Mary ; so let that settle the matter,' she said to this, in a rebuking, decided tone.

" I left the room without a word. I can hardly tell how I felt ; not in a good spirit, certainly. Never before had I permitted myself to indulge against Mrs. L—— bad thoughts. But I could not help it now ; and the moment I suffered my heart to rebel against arbitrary dictation, there rushed into my mind a flood of accusing thoughts. Scales seemed to have dropped from my eyes. I saw my relation to Mrs. L—— in a new light altogether. I asked myself how she would like a child of hers, no one of whom had been cared for and loved more tenderly than I had been, treated just as she had treated me ; made a mere *working machine*, as I had been made, and not a thought given to her mind, not a provision made for her future elevation above an uncongenial condition ? Such, thoughts, you may well suppose, did not make me feel any happier. From that time until

I left Mrs. L——, I became a dissatisfied murmurer—not openly, but in silence; but I am not conscious of having during that time neglected a task, or of having shown any reluctance to perform even the most unpleasant and trying duties imposed upon me. I never afterwards touched a book in the library. The newspapers I read, as usual, whenever I could find a leisure moment. To do this, I would sit up later in the kitchen, and in the summer time rise half an hour earlier. The great variety of topics introduced into the newspapers furnished my mind with general ideas, and these I thought about all day while attending faithfully to my calling. All I read, tended to fix in me a determination to leave Mrs. L—— and learn a trade so soon as I became of age. This I mentioned to her about three months before my time was up. She seemed surprised that I should have thought of such a thing, and at once opposed my intended plan. The ground she took was, that as I was not of a very robust constitution, and had been used to an active life, the change to one so quiet and inactive as that of a seamstress, would undermine my health. I felt that there was some force in this, but not sufficient to deter me from making the trial—so fixed was my repugnance to

remaining as I then was. Mrs. L—— saw that her arguments did not bear very strongly upon my mind, and this evidently vexed her. I did not then think that there was any thing selfish in her opposition,—I wish I could think so now. What I have since seen of the inefficiency, dishonesty, and want of almost every virtue in many domestics in other families, leaves me not at all in wonder that Mrs. L—— should have felt unpleasant at the thought of losing the services of one who had never shrunk from any task, and who had relieved her from the burden of half her family duties for years. But this does not make right the attempt to depress and oppress a friendless girl. She ought to have manifested towards me some generous interest after the term of my service had expired, especially as I had faithfully worked for her during the whole of that term, and been rewarded with only poor and scanty clothing and the food I daily eat. How grateful would I have been for a few months' schooling! or for even a few hours to myself during each week, when not pressed down with fatigue, with the encouragement to read and the right kind of books provided for me. But it was not dreamed that I, a poor bound girl, had any need of other food than bodily food, or of

other clothing than bodily clothing; that I was ever hungry, except for the bread and meat that perishes.

“On attaining my eighteenth year, Mrs. L—— gave me a new bonnet, very plain and common, an ordinary calico dress, a suit of under clothes, and a pair of shoes and stockings. This formed the best of every thing I had, and was, no doubt, considered by her very good and very liberal for one in my condition. Besides these, I had only a few worn and faded frocks, and some thin, patched under clothes, and two or three pairs of well-darned stockings. In order to learn the trade of dress-making, which I preferred to all others, it would be necessary for me to give my services for one year, and pay, besides, a fee of thirty dollars. This included boarding in the family of the person from whom I learned. But I could not pay any fee, for I had no money. There was, however, another way. I could, by working two years, avoid giving any fee. But two years was a long time to serve, and I hadn't clothes for one year, much less for two. There was still another plan. By boarding out of the house, I could get a trade in one year. This last plan I selected as the only one open to me. Of

course, to enter into it, I must find some one willing to board me for what I could do before breakfast in the morning, and after tea in the evening; and I must, besides, have clothes enough to last for a year, and these must be of a kind and quality, in which I could appear, without attracting notice, among the young misses of the work room.

“The place to board I did not know, nor had I the required stock of clothing. But I was not discouraged. Friendless stranger as I was, every where beyond the threshold of Mrs. L——’s door, I nevertheless resolved to have a trade, and in the way just mentioned. But, first, it would be necessary for me to work for wages, until I had obtained genteel clothing sufficient to last me for a year—and during the time thus engaged, I felt sure that I could find some one who, for the little I would eat, would be willing to accept about five hours’ service from me every day. I frankly stated to Mrs. L—— my intention, as soon as I gained my eighteenth year. She said I mustn’t think of such a thing. That it would kill me. That the change from my active life, to the inaction of a work room, would be severe enough—indeed too severe for me—without adding labor before

day in the morning, and after night, for the sake of getting my board. I did not reply to her argument; but my mind was fixed.

“The wages tendered me by Mrs. L—— was three dollars a month, scarcely half what my services were worth to her, and certainly not one-half what she would have been willing to give me rather than lose my services, as her own offer afterwards showed. My great reluctance to going into any other family to do housework, caused me to accept the poor compensation offered. On three dollars a month, it took me a whole year to earn thirty-six dollars, all of which I laid out in the most careful manner, for good articles of clothing, which I made up with my own hands after I had finished my daily labors. I said nothing about a trade to Mrs. L——, nor she to me. This would only have interrupted the good feeling between us, and I loved peace, kind looks, and kind words too well to risk any allusion to the subject. But I was, notwithstanding, firm in my resolution. Towards the end of the year, I happened to learn, seemingly by accident, of a lady and her daughter, in reduced circumstances, who would be glad to enter into just such an

arrangement with some one as I wished to make. I went to see them, and they at once agreed to accept my services as a domestic, for my board.

“As soon as I had all my arrangements completed, even to the engagement of myself to a dress-maker for a year, I told Mrs. L—— what I had done. She became instantly very angry, and charged me with ingratitude towards her. Said she had taken me out of the street, when I would soon have been sent to the poorhouse, and had been at a great deal of pains and trouble to make something out of me ; and now, just when my services were becoming of some value to her, I was about going away. But this was just the way persons of my class always served their benefactors. We were an ungrateful set. And a great deal more to the same effect. I cannot tell you, Mrs. Elmwood, how this hurt me. I had loved Mrs. L——, notwithstanding I often felt as if she might look more closely to my good, as a human being and a Christian. She was uniformly kind in her manner towards me—and for this I loved her. But now, the charge of ingratitude, and the assumption that she had done so much for me—when it was too painfully evident, that she cared not a straw for me, apart from the service I could

render her, and which she could not get from any one else—wrought a great change in my feelings. In spite of a severe struggle with myself, I could not help despising her for her narrow minded, selfish desire to grind down and oppress a poor, friendless girl. Instantly my mind threw off the feeling of deference, and the oppressing sense of infirmity with which it had always bowed in her presence, and I stood before her in calm, silent, conscious superiority. I might be able to give my body to be burned, but to act towards any one with the selfish desire to oppress that she had acted towards me, was contrary to my nature, and could not be done. I made no reply, but turned from her presence, and left the room. I had yet a month to stay, before the period arrived at which I was to enter upon my new term of service. During that period, Mrs. L—— hardly spoke to me, and whenever I happened to be where she was, her manner towards me was cold, constrained, and bore the appearance of anger.

“At last the time came for me to leave my home of eight years. It was a hard trial. All the kind feelings I had entertained for Mrs. L—— came back upon my heart with double force from their temporary suspension. But she did not



even allow me to take her hand in parting, and her cold ‘Good-bye, Mary,’ chilled me through and through. As I have before said, I went back to the house, once, to see her, but she sent down word that she was engaged. I understood very well what that meant, and never went there again. Twice I met her in the street, and paused, involuntarily, but she nodded coldly, and passed on. Here I met her the third time. I need not tell you how I was received. All this hurts me more than any one can tell.

“For the first six months after going to my trade, the loss of her kindness, and the absence of her face—that long familiarity had rendered almost like a mother’s face to me—preyed upon my mind so, that I lost my appetite. The change in my mode of life was trying enough to a delicate frame, even with a cheerful mind. But to sit and sew for ten hours each day, when for eight years I had been engaged in vigorous bodily exercise, and to have added to this such depressed feelings, that when I sat down to my meals the food had no sweet taste for my mouth, was more than I could well bear up under. I soon had a constant pain in my side, and grew pale and languid. In the mornings when I awoke, I felt so

sluggish that I could with difficulty force myself to get up ; and after I had prepared breakfast for the family in which I was working for my board, had to force myself to eat a few mouthfuls.

“ By the time my year was up I found my system greatly enfeebled. My appetite never came back. Night after night I would dream of seeing spread out before me tables covered with tempting food, of which a keen sense of hunger would prompt me to reach out my hand to partake, when all would vanish ; but when day had come, I loathed the food that was set before me. Released from my close confinement of a whole year, I resolved to give myself more exercise in the open air ; to sit at the work table less than ten hours, until I got back the healthy action in my body. This was more easily resolved than done. It was a very busy season, and the dress-maker with whom I had served my time, wished me to continue sewing for her a couple of months on wages, until the press of business was over. I consented ; and, as I did not now have to work for my boarding, instead of sewing ten hours, I often worked twelve. Of course, this did me no good. The exercise I had necessarily to take in doing the housework of the family where I boarded, was far

better for me than the new system of lying in bed an hour later in the morning and sitting at the work table two hours later in the evening. Indeed, I now got no exercise at all worth speaking of.

“At the end of the two months, when work fell off, I had become so weak that it was with difficulty I could get through the duties of the day. My face had become very pale, my whole body emaciated, and my frame so enfeebled that the effort to walk from the work room to my boarding house, only a few squares, made me tremble all over. It was good for me that I could get no more work to do for three months. I was a stranger in the city where I had lived for nine years, and knew not to what family to offer my services. This troubled me a good deal, although in the place where I boarded, services rendered in various ways saved me all expense, except for clothes. In the two months that I received money for my work, I made, clear of what I paid for boarding, sixteen dollars. This, carefully laid out, provided me with clothes suitable to make an appearance in families where I wished to get employment. I had nearly recovered my health, or apparently so, when I got a place to sew for three or four weeks. When through there, another

family wanted my services, and ever since I have been kept busy : but I am very much afraid, Mrs. Elmwood, that my health has received a shock from which it will not easily recover. Mrs. L—— was right when she said that to change my mode of life so thoroughly would be more than I could bear ; and yet I feel sure that if she had kindly encouraged me when she saw how desirous I was of learning a trade, had procured for me a good place, and then let me have continued at my old home until I had finished my trade, it would have been very different with me. I know that it was my mind that destroyed my appetite, and without an appetite for wholesome food, how could I bear up under severer trials of body.

“But I fear that I have already more than wearied you out with the story of my poor life ; and I am not sure that in speaking so freely of Mrs. L—— as I have done, I have not been wrong—but what I have said is said, and cannot now be recalled.’

## CHAPTER V.

## MY OLD WASHERWOMAN.

It was on Monday, our regular washing day, that Mary M'Lean told me her history, and I was sitting, a little while before the dusk of evening, thinking it over, and wondering in my own mind how any one could be so unjust as Mrs. L—— had been to Mary. It was so much worse, because it was the strong oppressing the weak. I was thus musing when Nancy, my old colored washerwoman, whom I have paid regularly every week for her day's work at the washing tub, during the past six years, presented herself at the door of my room, as has always been her custom, to notify me that her part of the contract had been fulfilled, and that it was now time for me to fulfil my portion of it. It so happened that, for the first time, I had not the accustomed half dollar ready for her. I had three or four silver dollars in change, but I only owed her half a dollar, and so could not make it out.

“I havn't a single half dollar in change, Nancy,”

I said, looking up into the old woman's face ; "but no matter, it will do as well next Monday, when you come again."

For a moment Nancy hesitated, and I could see that she was disappointed. Then she turned and walked slowly away without saying a word. I did not like this. Punctually, for six years, had I paid her at the close of every washing day, and now, it happening that I could not make the change, she was not pleased. Thus I thought, and permitted such thoughts to linger in my mind, until I grew quite angry in my feelings towards old Nancy. I called her greedy ; and permitted myself to imagine that she was afraid I would not pay her. The more I thought about it, the more my mind became disturbed, and the more unkind things did I permit myself to harbor against her.

In the evening, when my husband came in, he noticed in a moment that my mind was not in a placid state.

"Has any thing happened to disturb you, Mary?" he asked, in his usually kind way.

"Yes, there has," I returned in a petulant tone, "and I feel vexed, in spite of myself."

"Pray, what has occurred, Mary, thus to disturb your usually quiet mind?"

"Oh, nothing to trouble you," I replied, seeing that my husband looked uneasy. "I am a little foolish, no doubt, but then I can't help it. I happened not to have half a dollar in change to-day, when Nancy finished her washing. It is the first time it has happened for six years, and so I told her that I would hand it to her on next Monday, when she came. But the old thing (I never spoke of her so before,) hesitated, and didn't seem willing to go without her money. It vexed me downright—just as if I would cheat her out of it."

I must confess that when I came to relate the matter to my husband, I felt a little ashamed about it. It sounded rather foolish even to my ears.

"Did you get the half dollar for her?" he asked, as soon as I had closed my brief relation.

"No, I did not: I wasn't going to humor her in that way."

"I'm afraid my good wife is in the wrong this time," my husband said, with his usual honest frankness. "Nancy had earned her money, and was entitled to it."

"I know that well enough," I returned; "but then the mere trifle of half a dollar was not a matter of so much consequence as to make her afraid to let it lie in my hands for one week. She never

had to wait an hour in her life before for what I owed her."

"Why should you think it involved a doubt of your honesty, Mary?" responded my husband. "Can you not imagine some other reason?"

"What other reason could there be?" I asked.

"Want of money was no doubt the true reason. A washerwoman earns so little that she can never have much ahead at any time. A half dollar a day for three or four days in the week, does not make up a very large income, and will rarely permit the person who earns it to lay by much. No doubt poor old Nancy is at this moment suffering privation of some kind in consequence of not having received her hard day's earnings."

"O no, husband, I have no idea of that," I replied, in a changed tone. "Nancy lives very comfortably, I believe. She doesn't want for any thing."

"Do not be so certain of that. Her wants may be small, but her means of support are small likewise. Depend upon it, her exhibition of disappointment to-day arose from a deeper source than a mere desire to get her money that she might possess it, and lay it by."

I did not reply to this, because it set me to think-



ing—and my thoughts troubled me. While I permitted myself to be displeased with Nancy, I could indulge in an accusing spirit against her: but now, a feeling of kindness had been awakened by my husband's remarks, and this gained strength every moment, until my heart was pained at the thought that the poor creature might actually be suffering because I had neglected to have the small pittance she had earned by a hard day's labour, ready for her when her work was done.

“I am sorry I did not give her a dollar, and thus pay her in advance for next week, instead of making her wait a week for what she had earned,” I said, half aloud.

“That would have been better, Mary,” my husband replied. “But it is not too late, yet, to repair your error. Do you know where she lives?”

“The cook does, I believe.”

“Then call her up, and send her with the half dollar to Nancy.”

“I will, after tea,” I answered.

“O no. Send her before tea. Let us wait. Perhaps the poor old creature has a use for that single half dollar, of which we dream not.”

The cook was called up, but she said that Nancy

lived at No. 10 L—— street, which was a long distance from our house.

“Never mind,” said my husband; “I will walk down that way after tea.”

“O no. I wouldn’t do that,” I said.

“I would rather,” was his quiet, firm reply. Whenever he spoke in the peculiar tone in which he uttered his last remark, I never objected further; and so I remained silent.

After tea, he put on his hat and walked out. He did not return for an hour. When he came in he looked serious.

“Did you find her, dear?” I asked.

“Yes,” he replied.

“And did she really stand in need of the money?”

“Listen, and you shall learn,” he replied. “You remember old Nancy had a daughter who was married a few years ago. Well, I found that the old woman lived in a room up stairs in L—— street, and that this daughter was with her, quite sick. Her husband had treated her badly, and had gone off to New Orleans, some weeks ago. When I entered old Nancy’s poorly furnished room, she arose very quickly to her feet, and looked very much surprised to see me.”

“ ‘Mrs. Elmwood,’ I said to her in as kind a voice as I could assume, ‘is sorry that she hadn’t the change to give you to-day for your washing. She has thought, since you went away, that perhaps you might want it, and as I thought so too, I have stepped in to give it to you.’

“ The poor old creature seemed touched at this. Her voice choked as she attempted to utter her thanks, and then she held down her head, and seemed a good deal moved.

“ ‘Is this your daughter?’ I asked, wishing to relieve her from the embarrassment she seemed to feel.

“ She said that it was. That she had been sick for some weeks. That her husband had gone off and left her, and all the burden of her care and support in sickness had fallen upon her. I continued to question her, and get her free and artless answers, until I learned that since Saturday they had had but little food, and that she had not been able to buy the medicine ordered by the doctor for her daughter.

“ ‘Mrs. Elmwood had always paid me as soon as my washing is done,’ she went on, ‘and so I told Jane she must bear every thing as well as she could, until I came home this evening, when I

would get her some medicine, and cook something nice for her to eat. I worked harder than usual, thinking all the time of my poor sick child. At last I finished, and went up, as I always do, to get my money. But Mrs. Elmwood hadn't any change! I can't tell you how bad I felt as I went home. I hated to come into my room to see Jane. When I did get home, my poor child looked at me with a look that made my heart ache. She had waited, I could see, patiently all day, alone in her sick bed, and now her wants were to be satisfied. But I had to disappoint her. She tried not to show how bad she felt when I told her that Mrs. Elmwood had not paid me, but the tears ran down her face.'

"I could hear no more. 'Here is your money, Nancy, and as much more into the bargain, to make up for your disappointment,' I said, handing her a dollar. I would have given her more, had I yielded to my feelings. But I knew that sum would meet all her immediate wants. I then broke away from the grateful creature, as well as I could, assuring her that while her daughter lay sick she should have three quarters a day for washing at our home—the pay never to fail."

The narrative of my husband rebuked and hum-

bled me. I both saw and felt that I had acted wrong in not thinking beforehand, and providing the change for my washerwoman—and still more wrongly in suffering my mind to blame her for appearing to feel disappointed, when she had so much cause to be really distressed, at not receiving her hard-earned wages.

“I will be more considerate in future,” I said to my husband, after I had sat silent for some time, drying my eyes as I spoke.

“I am sure you will, Mary,” he replied. “Of the poor people who work for us, we never can be too thoughtful. It is but little that they can earn at best, and that little should be promptly paid; for it is never earned before it is needed.”

This event humbled me a good deal. At the very time I was looking intently at, and condemning the fault of another, I was permitting myself to be led into a fault of a similar kind. While condemning Mrs. L—— for oppressing Mary McLean, I actually oppressed my poor old washerwoman. Truly we are weak, sinful, erring mortals!

On the next day my husband brought home a newspaper, and said, as he handed it to me—

“There, wife, is a story about a washerwoman,

which I accidentally came across to-day. It will be an excellent accompaniment to our own little family incident of the same kind. In this, however, the wife puts the husband to the blush. But read it for yourself."

I took, the newspaper and found in it a story called "THE WASHERWOMAN'S BILL," which I read with a lively interest. As I think it calculated to do good, I will venture to repeat it here, for it will, I have no doubt, be new to most of my readers. Such domestic sketches are often strong prompters to duty. There are, like myself, a large number of persons who need to be often reminded of their social and domestic obligations. For my part, however, I sometimes almost despair of ever being a wise, judicious, humane woman. Selfishness is so imbedded in the warp and woof of my very nature, that its eradication seems almost impossible. But let me give here the story I have promised, which I take, as I have said, from a newspaper, brought me by my husband.

#### THE WASHERWOMAN'S BILL.

"It's only a trifle, Harriet, and she cannot want it very badly."

“But, if it is only a trifle to us, husband, it is of much importance to her.”

“Well, I havn’t got it to spare to-day, and so she will have to wait.”

“I am sorry. She will be here this morning, and I promised that it should be ready for her.”

“Tell her to come in a day or two, Harriet, and she shall have her money. Really, these washerwomen and seamstresses are exceedingly troublesome about a trifle, if you happen to owe it to them.”

And so saying, Mr. Lyons adjusted his collar before the looking-glass, drew on his gloves, and departed for his store. As he passed on the way, in a florist’s window, a beautiful japonica struck his fancy.

“What is the price of this japonica?” he asked, as he entered the green-house.

“Three dollars.”

“Can you send it home for me?”

“Certainly.”

“My number is 60 — street,” Mr. Lyons said, as he threw down the money. “Send it this morning, I want to take my wife, who is passionately fond of camelias, by surprise.”

In the mean time, there was wending her way

towards the comfortable dwelling of Mr. Lyons, a poor widow, whose daily and nightly toil barely sufficed to procure for herself and three little ones, the scanty clothes and meagre food that nature required. During the preceding winter, a too-frequent exposure to cold, had brought on an attack of rheumatism, which, while it did not entirely prevent her from going about her daily occupations, made the performance of them often exceedingly painful, and at all times wearisome. Heretofore, a good constitution had enabled her to endure almost any degree of fatigue—and she had taxed herself to the utmost, for the sake of her children. Since the winter, however, her strength had failed her, and often she would be obliged to put by her work, and lie down for an hour or so, to recover herself, and then, after becoming rested, go at it again. The consequence was, that it became much more difficult for her to provide, comfortably, for her little family, and she was much oftener brought into narrow and difficult places.

Her main dependence was in washing and ironing; but she likewise took in plain sewing from the shops, over which she toiled often until after the hour of midnight. As the spring advanced,



she grew feebler instead of gaining strength, and oftener experienced a sense of excessive fatigue, that made her daily tasks doubly burdensome. The tolerably even flow of spirits that health had produced, was succeeded by periodical states of despondency, into which she would fall, and suffer from them exceedingly.

"How do you get along now, Mrs. Grant?" a kind neighbor said to her one day about this time, when her thoughts were dark, and her feelings gloomy.

"I don't seem to get along at all, Mrs. Mason. Indeed, I can hardly get comfortable food for my children; and in doing even that, I feel overdone almost, every day. It is a very hard way to get a living, to have to stand over the wash tub, Mrs. Mason. But that isn't the worst. After you have earned your money it is in too many cases equally hard to get it."

"Why don't you wash for people in good circumstances, Mrs. Grant? You can't afford to spend your time and strength for such as are too proud or lazy to do their own washing, and too poor to pay for it when it is done for them."

"I do wash for people in good circumstances, Mrs. Mason; but it is too often the case that they

are the worst persons, that one who is really poor, and wants her money as I do as soon as it is earned, can work for. When you take your clothes home, the lady has no change, and will pay you the next time you come, when perhaps you have hurried back the clothes to get something with which to go to market. They never seem to think that a woman with two or three children, who is compelled to support them by taking in washing, must want the little that she can make as fast as it is earned. But it is not only once that you are told to call again—the plea of no change to-day, meets your ear on almost every occasion, until you are forced to tell them right down, that necessity compels you to urge for the payment of your little dues. Then, too often, your importunity worries them, and you feel sick at heart as the money is tendered to you coldly, and you receive it as if it were a charity reluctantly given, and turn sadly away.”

“Indeed, then, it is a shame,” Mrs. Mason said with indignant warmth.

“It is very wrong,” the poor woman responded, “but in most cases I know that it arises from thoughtlessness. There are one or two families for which I do the washing, where the husbands,

I am sure, buy nearly every thing, and keep their wives very close for change. There is Mrs. Lyons, for instance, who I know feels very friendly to me, but I can hardly ever get my money from her until my washing has run on for three or four weeks. It is not her fault, I am sure, for I can tell very well."

"But I think she, and others under like circumstances, should insist upon their husbands leaving them the money for such bills."

"I suppose they would, Mrs. Mason, if they could have any idea of how much we poor people stand in need of the little we earn. If they were once compelled for awhile to support themselves and three or four little children on as many dollars a week, and that earned by standing over the wash tub and ironing-table, and sitting up half the night sewing, they would have more consideration for us."

"But all do not treat you so, Mrs. Grant?"

"Oh, no. There are two ladies for whom I wash, who have never once told me to call again, nor even required me to ask for my money. The first thing they do, after I bring in my clothes, is to get me the money for that washing. They al-

ways think to have the right change laid by, and always remember to hand it to me."

"You ought to give up all who do not treat you in the same way."

"It is easy enough to give up a family, Mrs. Mason, but not so easy to get another. I had better go twice, and even three times for my money, than not have any to go for."

"That is very true, Mrs. Grant. It is a hard necessity."

It was about three or four weeks after this, that Mrs. Grant found herself out of flour, and out of nearly every kind of provision. She had not been very well, nor able to do much work, and her income was consequently smaller. It was Monday morning. On the Saturday evening previous she had expended her last half dollar in providing for Sunday, and now, after the scanty breakfast of bread and rye coffee, there was scarcely any thing left towards making another meal. All the ladies for whom she washed had paid her up except Mrs. Lyons, and she owed her three dollars for four weeks washing. Every week, for four weeks, she had been told there was no change, but that when she came again it should be ready for her.

Now there was an absolute necessity that she should have it, but her heart trembled with a feeling of painful uncertainty as she turned her steps towards the dwelling of Mrs. Lyons. As she passed up the alley leading to the yard of the house, a lad handed in at the front door the beautiful *camelia japonica* that Mr. Lyons had bought from the florist.

"Oh, what a beautiful *camelia*!" exclaimed Mrs. Lyons, as the flower was brought into the parlor. "Where did it come from?"

"The boy said that Mr. Lyons sent it," the servant replied, setting down the pot containing the flower, and leaving the room.

"Beautiful! beautiful!" was the repeated ejaculation of Mrs. Lyons, as she gazed and gazed upon the flower, unable to satisfy her eyes with its loveliness. While thus absorbed, the chambermaid opened the door, and said,—

"Mrs. Grant is down stairs, ma'am."

"Well, give her the clothes, Julia."

"Yes, ma'am;" and Julia withdrew to comply with her directions.

In about ten minutes she opened the door again with—

"The clothes are all ready, ma'am, but Mrs. Grant says that she wants to see you."

"It's no difference about her seeing me, Julia. Tell her that Mr. Lyons neglected to leave me any change this morning, but that if she will come up day after to-morrow, she shall have it."

"Mrs. Lyons says, that if you will come up day after to-morrow she will pay you," said Julia, on returning to the kitchen.

"Tell Mrs. Lyons," the washerwoman said, in a voice that trembled, "that I should like to see her for a few moments."

This request was conveyed to Mrs. Lyons, and she gave directions, with no good grace, however, for Mrs. Grant to be invited into the parlor.

"Good morning, Mrs. Grant! How do you do this morning?" she said, with an effort to seem indifferent, as the poor woman entered.

"I cannot say that I feel very well, Mrs. Lyons. I find my health giving way very fast."

"I am really sorry to hear it, Mrs. Grant; and I am sorry, too, that I have no change for you this morning. I hope you do not want it very badly."

There was something kind and sympathizing

in the tone of Mrs. Lyons' voice as she uttered the last sentence, and it touched the heart of the poor woman.

"If I did not want it very badly, I would not ask you for it," she said, the tears dimming her eyes, "but indeed, Mrs. Lyons, unless I get some money from you, my little ones must go supperless to bed to-night."

Thus much was she able to articulate, and then her feelings gave way, and the tears fell in large drops from her eyes.

"Surely, Mrs. Grant, it is not so bad as that with you?" Mrs. Lyons said, with a troubled countenance.

"Indeed, it is, ma'am," the poor woman replied, as soon as she had recovered her feeling enough to speak calmly. "It isn't with us as it is with you rich folks. We have to live from hand to mouth, as they say, nearly all the while; and sometimes we are very hard put to it to get a comfortable meal. This morning my children had only dry bread for breakfast, and I have not even potatoes for their dinner."

"You ought to have told me before that you were so hard put to it," Mrs. Lyons said in a subdued tone, her words seeming to choke her as

she uttered them. "If I had known that you were so much in want of your money you should always have had it."

"We poor folks, if we are poor, ma'am, don't like to be always telling of our poverty. We bear a great deal before we speak."

"But that is wrong, Mrs. Grant. You should speak out plainly."

"And be called complainers, as we most always are, when we ask for what we have earned, and, as a reason, tell our story of need."

There was a bitterness in the tone of Mrs. Grant's voice that fell upon the ear of Mrs. Lyons with a keen reproof.

"I believe I have never called you a complainer," she said.

"O, no, Mrs. Lyons. I didn't mean you. For I have never told you before how greatly I was in need of a little money, and would not have told you now, only that I could not bear to see my children want for something to eat."

"But how is it, Mrs. Grant, that you are so very hard put to it? You seem industrious."

"That is not very hard to explain," the washerwoman replied. "I wash for you and Mrs. Jones, at three-quarters of a dollar a week. That is a



dollar and a half. Then I do the washing of two other families, which brings in two dollars more, and a half a dollar I get for Mrs. Thompson's washing, which makes just four dollars. Besides, I can sometimes make four or five coarse shirts for the clothing stores, at ten cents a piece—but I have to sit up very late at night when I do it. And this is about all that I can earn—never more than about four dollars and a half a week—and too often not over four dollars ; for frequently I am so much overcome by night, that I have to go to bed. Now, with three children to feed and clothe, rent to pay, and wood to buy, how is it possible, Mrs. Lyons, that I can be otherwise than hard put to it? Still, if all the people for whom I work, were to pay me as soon as my washing is carried home, I would not complain. I would get along somehow.”

“And don't they always pay you, Mrs. Grant?”

“O, no, indeed ma'am ; at least not all of them. But there is Mrs. Merrill and Mrs. Sidney, who always hand me my money as soon as I bring in my clothes.”

“Then who are they that do not pay you promptly?”

“Why—there is—Mrs. Thompson, I always have to go to her three or four times.”

“And who else, Mrs. Grant?”

The washerwoman looked confused at this question, and cast her eyes upon the floor.

“Speak out plainly, Mrs. Grant. You only wash for four ladies, and if two of them pay you, promptly, there can be but one beside Mrs. Thompson, who does not do the same; and that one must be myself. So, then, on Mrs. Thompson’s shoulders, and mine, must lie the sin of causing you many of the troubles and privations you complain of.”

Mrs. Grant did not reply. She could not say no, and did not wish to say yes. A pause, painful to both, was, in consequence, the result. This continued, however, but a few minutes, when Mrs. Lyons said—

“I have not a dollar in the house, Mrs. Grant, but, if you will take the trouble to go down to my husband’s store, I will give you a note to him, and he will pay you. How much do we owe you?”

“Three dollars, ma’am.”

“Very well. If you can go down to the store you shall have your money.”

“O, certainly ma’am, and thank you kindly.”

In a few minutes, Mrs. Lyons handed her washerwoman a sealed note of the following import:

*"Dear Husband,*—If you can possibly do so, spare Mrs. Grant, our washerwoman, who will hand you this, three dollars, the amount that I owe her. She wants it very badly. Don't put her off, please ———"

The distance to Mr. Lyons' store was full half a mile, in a direction different from that in which Mrs. Grant lived. But she thought not of that—only of her children and the money that was to provide them with food. First taking home the bundle of clothes that were to be washed, she then repaired to the merchant's store.

"Is Mr. Lyons in?" she asked, as she entered.

"No, he is gone out," was the reply made by one of the clerks, in rather a rude way.

"How soon will he be in, sir?" she asked, timidly, and hesitatingly.

"Don't know,"—indifferently—turning away and whistling an air.

The poor woman paused for a moment, then turned towards the door, and moved a few steps—paused again, and stood still for more than a minute.

"I will wait for a little while," she at length said, addressing the same clerk.

He did not reply, nor offer the woman a chair. For more than fifteen minutes she stood waiting Mr. Lyons' return, until she became faint from

standing still so long. She also began to feel very uneasy about her little children, whom she had left alone much longer than usual.

"I will call again," she said, at last. "At what time do you think I would be most certain to find him in?"

"Can't tell," was the indifferent reply.

Mrs. Grant turned away from the store of the merchant with a sickening sensation about her heart. In about fifteen minutes she reached her own humble dwelling.

"O mother, mother!" cried her little ones as she entered, "now we are to have some good bread and milk!"

The poor woman, on going away to the store of Mr. Lyons, had promised, that as soon as she returned, she would get them a fresh loaf of bread, and some good milk.

For a few minutes she did not know what answer to make. She had promised them, and her heart yearned to fulfil that promise, to give them bread.

"Wait a little," she said, going to the closet, and taking down an old pitcher. With this she went to a shop near by, and said, as she entered—

"Let me have a quart of milk and a loaf of

bread, Mr. Hardy. I will pay you for them this afternoon."

"But you know that you owe me over a dollar now, and that you promised to give it to me several days ago."

"I know it, Mr. Hardy, and the money is owed to me, and is promised to me to-day. I would not ask you to let me have any more now, but my children are hungry, and I have nothing in the house to eat."

The shop-keeper believed in Mrs. Grant's willingness to pay. He only feared her inability.

"I will trust you for this," he said, after a pause, "but cannot let you have any more until you pay what is due me."

"Can't you add a little corn meal, and some potatoes? I don't think that I shall be able to get my money before the afternoon, and I shall have nothing for the children's dinners."

Another moment or two of hesitation passed, and the shop-keeper said—

"Well, I don't care, Mrs. Grant. But I shall expect the whole this afternoon."

"You shall certainly have it, Mr. Hardy," was the reply.

A five-penny-bit's worth of corn meal, and a

quarter of a peck of potatoes, were taken home with her bread and milk—the latter of the two first named articles, to serve for dinner, and the former for supper, should any accident prevent her seeing Mr. Lyons. Thus provided, she resolved to wait until towards evening before going again to his store. First giving to each of her children, the eldest ten, and the youngest five years of age, a bowl of bread and milk, and looking on them for a moment or two as they eagerly devoured their wholesome repast, with a glow of pleasure warming over her heart, she commenced the labors of the day at the late hour of nearly eleven.

“O what a beautiful *Camelia* you sent me!” Mrs. Lyons said, as her husband came home to dinner.

“Is it not a lovely one?” he replied.

“Indeed it is! What did you pay for it?”

“Three dollars. But it is one of such rare beauty, that I did not think a moment of the trifle asked for it.”

“It is really a magnificent flower.”

“Madam De Goni has her concert to-night,”—Mr. Lyons said, after a few moments.

“True. I had forgotten that.”

“Here are a couple of tickets, I could not fore-

go the temptation, although they were a dollar a piece."

"O, I am glad you bought them. I wish to go very much. But I must have five or six dollars to get a few little things that I must have, if I am to go out to-night."

"Certainly," Mr. Lyons said, and taking out his pocket book, handed her the amount she wished.

The dinner passed without poor Mrs. Grant being once thought of. Her case did occur to Mrs. Lyons, as she was going out for the purpose of making the trifling purchases that she wanted, but it was dismissed at once, under the idea that her husband had, of course, honored her little draft.

It was about two o'clock when Mrs. Grant sat down with her children to partake of their meal of roasted potatoes and salt—the same hour that Mr. and Mrs. Lyons seated themselves at their well filled table, all unregardful of the poor widow from whom they had so thoughtlessly withheld the meagre pittance she had earned so hardly. After their frugal repast was over, Mrs. Grant again resumed her work, and continued it until four o'clock, when she put on her bonnet, and, again, repaired to Mr. Lyons' store.

"Is Mr. Lyons in now?" she asked of the same individual to whom she had addressed herself in the morning.

"No"—was the brief answer.

"Will he be in soon?" the woman ventured to ask, although half deterred by the young man's repulsive manner.

"I expect not"—was the cool reply.

Mrs. Grant turned away again, with a sadder heart than before, and directed her course homeward.

Three minutes after she had left, Mr. Lyons returned to his store.

"There's been an old woman here twice to-day, asking for you"—said the young man, who had answered to her inquiry.

"Well, what did she want?"

"Humph! I'd no—Charity I should think, from her looks."

"Oh——" and Mr. Lyons tossed his head with an air of contempt and impatience, as he turned away from his clerk.

"I shall be so delighted to-night!" Mrs. Lyons said, as they were taking an early tea, to be ready to go in time to the concert.



"I have no doubt of it. Her performance on the guitar is said to be exquisite."

"I should like to hear Knoop very much," Mrs. L. remarked.

"So should I. I am told that the violoncello never gave such tones under any hand as it gives under his."

"We will go next week—will we not?"

"Yes. For I should like to hear him very much."

Just as they were rising from the table Mrs. Lyons said—

"Oh! did you pay Mrs. Grant those three dollars to-day?"

"No—What Mrs. Grant? What three dollars?"

"Why Mrs. Grant our washerwoman. I gave her a note to you this morning, asking you to pay her the trifle we owe her."

"If you did, she never came for it."

"That is strange. She told me that she was really suffering—that she had not a single loaf of bread in the house, nor any money to buy food for her children. She would not have told me this, only, as you could not spare me the money for her this morning, I tried to put her off. Poor

creature! I am afraid that I have been much to blame in not always paying her for her washing as soon as it was done. I forgot that her resources were but limited, and that the least obstruction of them, must produce inconvenience if not absolute want. The tale she told me this morning, made my heart ache, and my cheeks burn with shame."

"Without food for her children, did you say, Harriet?"

"Yes. And her tone and manners told but too truly, that she was sadly in earnest."

"Strange, then, that she did not call."

"It is strange, certainly."

"I remember now," Mr. Lyons said, after thinking for a moment or two, "that they told me this afternoon, about an old woman having been in twice to ask for me."

"That must have been her. Poor creature!"—  
Then after a pause—

"I cannot go to the concert to-night, husband, until I have seen Mrs. Grant. Just think of her and her three little children, without food, and all because of our neglect, who have plenty, and to spare. It makes me feel sick at heart. The price of that japonica would have relieved all her wants—

and you bought it with the very money that you could not spare for the washerwoman who had earned it, and only asked for her own."

Mr. Lyons did not reply for some time, during which he stood in deep thought. He was not a man of confirmed selfishness ; though thoughtless of others, and mainly disposed to have but small consideration for them. Now, a sense of the injustice of his conduct, became distinct in his mind, and he felt, painfully, that he had been guilty of wrong.

"Put up a basket of provisions, Harriet," he said, suddenly rousing himself from his unpleasant reverie, and let James bring it along. I will not go to the concert, either, until I have seen Mrs. Grant with you, and rendered her that justice which is her due. This thing has taught me a lesson that I shall never forget."

Bread and butter, cold meat, cheese, tea, and sugar, were placed in a basket, and as soon as Mrs. Lyons was dressed for the concert, James was directed to proceed with the basket to the dwelling of Mrs. Grant, while they followed in close company. When they arrived at her abode, they saw, through the window, that the little family were about sitting down to supper ; and paused

long enough to see the mother bow her head, for a few moments, and ask, doubtless, a blessing on the food that was spread before herself and children. 'Then they opened the door, without knocking, and passed into the widow's humble dwelling. A glance sufficed to show that the supper consisted of the preparation of corn meal, called, in the middle and southern states, "mush." Besides this, there was nothing on the table, to be eaten—no milk, nor molasses, nor butter to impart a relish to their coarse fare—nor tea, an article that use has rendered no necessary to a woman, especially when fatigued from long and incessant toil.

Mrs. Grant rose in surprise at the unexpected appearance of Mr. and Mrs. Lyons.

"I fear we have wronged you very much, ma'am," Mr. Lyons said. "And we have come to make amends, if that can possibly be done, for the privations and troubles that we have been the cause of your suffering. Here is the money you ought to have had this morning," (handing her three dollars)—"in fact a week ago. And here are some provisions for you, to save you the trouble of having to go out to-night"—motioning the servant to come forward with the basket. "And now, Mrs. Grant, if you and your little ones will forgive us, we will try and be more regardful of you, hereafter."

"May Heaven bless you for your kind consideration!" the widow said, clasping her hands fervently, and looking upwards.

"And may Heaven forgive us for the wrong we have done!" Mr. Lyons replied.

"Do not speak of it. All is now past, and all will be well again," the widow said, as the tears started from her eyes, and stole down her careworn cheek.

When Mr. and Mrs. Lyons turned away from the poor woman's humble abode, they turned away with feelings new to their hearts—feelings of intense sympathy for one, and in one, all, in that trying condition of life where the absolute wants of nature are meagerly supplied, by incessant toil— toil so severe as often to wear out gradually the constitution, and drag down its subjects to premature graves. And they departed with the widow's blessing upon their heads. Never afterwards did they neglect to pay on the very day it was done, to the servant, or seamstress, or washerwoman, the small sum of their earnings. May others, who read this, and have lapsed into the same thoughtless habit, take a lesson from their lesson, and do so no more. Every principle of justice and humanity claims it of them.

## CHAPTER VI.

## DEATH OF MARY M'LEAN.

MARY McLEAN continued to sew for me for six weeks, and at the end of that time went to another place; one of my friends having, on my recommendation, engaged her to do a few weeks' work. It was some months before I saw her again, though I thought of her many times. She had interested me very much. I had never met with one in her walk of life who possessed so many qualities to be admired—even loved. But how sadly had she been wronged! Never, after hearing her artless story, could I feel towards Mrs. L—— as once I felt. The wrong done to the poor girl who had no one else to whom she could look up, was too deep.

During the next Fall, she sewed for me again. A few months had made serious inroads upon her health. Her face was thinner and paler, and her eyes brighter. She had, too, a very unfavourable stoop in her shoulders, compressing her chest, and preventing full and healthy respiration. A slight,

dry cough, likewise, was perceptible, as if from tickling low down in the windpipe. At her work, I noticed that she did not sit easily, but every little while changed her position, as if from weariness or pain. On asking the reason of this, she said that she was much troubled with a pain in her side ; but she hoped to get rid of it soon. She had been to the doctor's, and he had given her some medicine for it. Her appetite was very poor. Mr. Elmwood noticed the change in her, and spoke of it to me with concern. Her modest demeanor had always pleased him.

“That girl won't live long,” he said, “if she continues to sit and sew. She wants fresh air, and more exercise. You must insist upon her walking out every day, for at least an hour. She ought to go morning and evening.”

My husband was more thoughtful than I had been. I went to Mary at once, and told her that I wanted her to put up her work and go out and walk for half an hour. She demurred at first ; but, afterwards, thankfully accepted the privilege. Whenever, after this, I perceived her beginning to change her position frequently, I would insist upon her laying aside her work, and either walking out, or spending half an hour sporting with the children.

She was fond of them, and they loved her. A glass of wine, and a cracker or two, after this exercise, particularly when taken towards the middle of the day, on an empty stomach, refreshed her very much. Mary sewed for me at this time for three weeks. When she went away, she looked like another person. Her step was lighter, her skin clearer and warmer, and her whole air much more cheerful. The pain in her side still continued, while sitting over her work, but it was not so severe. The reflection that my kind consideration, prompted, indeed, by my husband, who is ever thoughtful of others, had been of so much benefit to her, was a sweet reward.

In the spring I sent for Mary again, but was pained to receive word that she was too sick to go any where. I chid myself for not having taken a more active interest in her while out of my house than I had done, and at once dressed myself and went to see her. I found her in a small, close room, with few things comfortable around her, and no one to attend properly to her wants. She was much emaciated, and very feeble. A deep, hollow, jarring cough, told too eloquently, how fatally she was diseased. When I took her hand, and inquired in a kind, concerned voice, how she did, the



tears came to her eyes, and she could not, at first, compose herself to speak.

I found that it was four weeks since she had been out of the house, and the most of that time she had been confined to her bed. That the doctor had been to see her several times, and had given her medicine ; but that nothing seemed to do her any good. She appeared to be in very low spirits. I inquired as to her attendance, and found that it was sometimes nearly a whole day that no one came into the room to make any inquiry of her, or to see whether she wanted any thing. She paid a dollar and a quarter a week for boarding. Before going away, I saw the woman who kept the house, and explained to her Mary's really alarming condition, and the great need there was of her being more carefully attended. She seemed, however, quite indifferent ; said that she would rather have two well boarders than one sick one ; and that she didn't engage to wait on people in their rooms when she took them to board. There was a place provided for such as were sick, and too poor to hire a nurse—meaning the Alms House. I was shocked at this exhibition of inhumanity. Nearly four weeks had Mary been confined to her bed, with no attendance but that unwillingly rendered by this woman

It was little wonder then, that, with a mind and body like hers, that sympathized so acutely, no healthy reaction took place in her system.

My first impulse was to say that I would send a carriage for her, and have her well taken care of in my own house until she recovered. But a second thought in regard to the trouble it might be, kept me silent. "She may be sick a long time—may never get well in fact," I said to myself. As I was going away, with the promise to come again in a day or two, she turned her eyes upon me with a sad, appealing look—so I felt the meaning of their expression. It seemed to rebuke my selfish thoughts in regard to trouble. But I retired through the door of her chamber, closed it after me, and left her alone.

As I walked slowly homeward, I debated actively the question whether I should take the poor girl into my house, and have her carefully nursed. Many considerations opposed—mostly of a kind that regarded my own ease. "And why?" I asked myself, in this debate, "should I take Mary McLean more than another into my house? If I begin this thing with her, I shall be under an equal obligation to take any other poor sick girl into my family, who would, otherwise, have to go to the

Alms House. Mary has no claims upon me. I have fully paid her for all the services she has rendered me."

Thus I opposed the spontaneous impulse I had felt, to take her into my house, and minister, even with my own hand, to her wants. When I returned home, I mentioned to my husband the condition in which I had found Mary, and pictured to him, quite vividly, the poor girl's desponding state of mind. He was a good deal touched at this. After sitting thoughtful for a little while, he said—

"We have plenty of room, and plenty of domestics—suppose we have her brought here, and properly nursed? It will be an act of humanity—and, as we can do it, it becomes, I think, our duty."

"But suppose she were to die?" I suggested.

"Do you think her case so bad as that?" he asked.

"I don't know. But she has a dreadful cough, with heavy night sweats, and is greatly emaciated. She may recover, and she may not. Or, she may linger on for many months, even for a year."

Mr. Elmwood was silent and thoughtful again.

"All these are reasons," he then said, "why she ought not to be left where she is—why she ought to be well and kindly attended. I should

feel very bad to have her die where she is, of neglect ; not only bad for her, but bad for myself. I could never feel afterwards that I had done my duty."

" You are willing, then, to have her brought into the house ?"

" I am," was his decided reply. " That much we clearly owe to humanity."

After dinner a carriage was sent for, and, accompanied by my chamber maid, I went in it to the humble abode of my seamstress. I cannot but confess to a few struggles with pride before this was done. " Suppose," was the thought that intruded itself, " you were to be seen by Mrs. P—— or Mrs. L—— going into that little house, and assisting a mere sewing girl into a carriage ; what would she think ? You had better let the chambermaid go alone. She can arrange it all just as well as you can. You are doing enough in removing her into your house, without exposing yourself in doing the act." But my better feelings soon silenced these whisperings.

If the eye of Mary brightened when she saw me again, could I wonder at the glad expression of her whole countenance when I told her that I was going to remove her to my own house, and

have her well taken care of until her recovery. She did not attempt to speak her gratitude ; but it beamed from every lineament of her pale face.

After her removal, our family physician was called in, and the poor girl placed in his charge. He gave us but little encouragement in regard to her—said her lungs were deeply affected, and that she had all the symptoms of one in a hasty decline. He in subsequent visits confirmed this opinion, which was corroborated to our minds by the rapid sinking, too apparent, day after day, of the patient sufferer. In about three weeks after she came under our care, her cheeks began to be lit up with the deceitful hectic, that gave to her countenance a peculiar beauty. We all noticed this. At first the change partially deceived us ; but the physician knew the fatal sign too well. When it finally became certain that life was fast ebbing away, and that in a little while she must pass from the visible to the invisible world, I felt it to be my solemn duty to warn her of the approaching change. This was a painful trial. Death is to every one so appalling—even to him of threescore years—how much more so to the young maiden just entering, as it were, upon life ? I knew not what effect it would have upon Mary,

and I dreaded to break to her the alarming intelligence.

For several days I pondered over this duty, shrinking from it with an instinctive reluctance. It was late in the afternoon, not more than half an hour before sunset, when I went up to her room, and, seating myself by her bedside, took her hand in mine, and asked how she felt.

"Very weak," was her reply.

"You grow weaker every day, I think, Mary," I ventured to say.

"Yes, ma'am; I am aware of that," she returned with composure.

"The doctor"—my voice trembled in spite of all my efforts to appear calm—"begins to have some fears for the result of your present illness."

"But I have none."

I shall never forget the sweet smile that lit up her countenance as she said this.

"Then you expect to get well?"

"Oh no, ma'am! I shall never be well again in this world. Nor do I wish to be."

"Do you then feel willing to die, Mary?" I asked, in real surprise.

"Far more willing than to remain here. Why should I wish to live? Alone, and in poor health.

what is there in this world that is attractive to me?"

"But are you not afraid to die, Mary?"

She looked at me with an expression of surprise upon her face.

"Why should I fear to die? I confess that I am afraid to live. That the thought of getting up from this bed, and going out again into the world, friendless and companionless, is one from which I shrink. But to lay aside this poor body of earth, and rise into a new and glorious body, cannot be any thing but joyful."

"You have a hope then of a blessed immortality beyond the grave?"

"O yes. A deeply abiding and sustaining hope. My anchor is cast within the veil."

A pause ensued, when she resumed. "There is a favor, Mrs. Elmwood, that I wish to ask of you, which is, that you would send for Mrs. L——. I want to see her. I have had many hard thoughts of her, and she of me. All on my part I wish to lay aside. They are not such thoughts as I wish to take with me into the next world. They are of the earth, earthy, and let them remain here."

In accordance with this wish, I sent, on the

next day, for Mrs. L——. She had known nothing of Mary's illness, and when I told her that she had not long to remain here, she was painfully shocked. I did not go with her into Mary's room. I thought it much the best that their first interview should be alone. Mrs. L—— remained in the room with her for nearly an hour. When she came out her eyes were red with weeping. She said nothing to me of the nature of her intercourse with Mary ; but after expressing much interest in her, and thanking me warmly for my kindness toward her, she went away, promising to come again in the morning. I then went up into Mary's room. How calm, and sweet, and lovely was the expression of her countenance !

"Oh, Mrs. Elmwood !" she said, grasping my hand with eagerness, "I am so happy ! It is all over, and we are reconciled. We have forgiven each other all that is past. I can now go in peace."

From that time forth, her face wore a serener aspect. Mrs. L—— came regularly to see her, and they were often alone together for a long time.

"I fear," Mrs. L—— said to me one day after leaving the bedside of the sick girl, "that I have not been just to Mary ; and this has arisen in some degree from the fact that I did not know her. She



has a mind and heart above what we ordinarily find in girls of her class, and I did not perceive it, as I should have perceived it. I have been deeply to blame, and the thought pains and humbles me. How like an affectionate child would she have loved me and clung to me, had I treated her as if she had been a child ! I see this now, when, alas ! it is too late. I would take her back, and into my bosom now, if I could, for she is worthy of a place there ; but this is now denied me. To one comparatively a stranger to her, but who had the discrimination to perceive her real character, has been granted the privilege of smoothing the pillow that rests her dying head. This is a lesson, Mrs. Elmwood, that I shall never forget—for it has been too painfully impressed upon my mind. I see too clearly where I have been wrong, and the sad consequences of that wrong.”

This gave me both pain and pleasure. Pain for the acute suffering of mind that such an awakening to a sense of neglected duties must occasion—pleasure, that the awakening, while it threw light upon the heart of the poor girl, would make Mrs. L—— more thoughtful in future.

About a month after this Mary died. Her head rested upon the bosom of Mrs. L——, and

her hand in mine. Thus she passed away into a peaceful sleep, whose waking was in the world of spirits. We laid her beside her sister, and shed tears over her humble grave. Both Mrs. L—— and myself turned from the lowly spot, after the funeral rites had been said, and went back to our homes with better and more humane thoughts, and, I hope, better and more humane feelings than we had before known. But her reflections must have been, and still must be, whenever she thinks of Mary, acutely painful. Such gross neglect of duty, and such gross wrong to an orphan child, cannot rest easily upon the conscience. Many poor children are treated far worse than Mary M'Lean—for they have added to all disregard for them as moral and intelligent beings, positive physical abuse, and that of the most revolting kind. But that does not remove a single stain of the guilt appertaining to Mrs. L——. It is no light responsibility which Divine Providence lays upon us, when he commits to our care an immortal being, whose whole life here and hereafter, and whose whole action upon society for good or evil, elevation or depression, will be affected by the way in which we discharge our duty. It matters not whether that immortal being be our own child, or

the child of another—all are alike precious in the eyes of Him who is the Father of all. Careful indeed should we ever be, not to let our selfishness, our mere regard for our own temporal good, or physical ease, bind down in uncongenial servitude a mind formed by nature to rise into a higher plane of activity, and into the performance of higher uses in society than those to which we have consigned it. If the vine struggles to lift itself upward, let us not bend it down, and cause it to creep in unhealthy waste of all its powers upon the ground; but rather assist it to rise into purer regions, and there unfold itself, and produce its delicious clusters—the end of its existence.

I have lingered for a much longer time over the story of Mary M'Lean than I had intended. It has not been found, however, I trust, either uninteresting or unimportant to my readers. On my own mind, all the circumstances connected with it had the effect to make me look upon those in stations below me with a more considerate eye. We are too apt to think disparagingly of all those who are not our equals in external circumstances, and especially upon those whose duty it is to serve us. And we are much inclined to fall, at the same time, into the error of supposing that this

class of persons never think or feel—never aspire, nobly to rise above their stations, and enter the contest for excellence. And even when we do perceive this in spite of our wilful blindness, how naturally inclined are we to be jealous of imagined encroachments upon our sphere of life, and to be very philosophically considerate of those below us, in our attempts to keep them there; complacently arguing that they are in their true place, and to permit them to rise above it would be to do them the greatest possible injury. The fallacy of this, I need not attempt to show. Let the reader who is still unconvinced, contrast Mrs. L—— and Mary M'Lean, and determine in her own mind which was most fitted naturally to fill a station of influence and trust in society. I think the decision will not be found hard to make.

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE OLD COAL MAN—MOSES THE CARPET SHAKER.

A FEW cold days early in the fall made fires necessary, and as we had not laid in our winter's supply of fuel, it became necessary to get a single ton of coal.

As soon as the load was thrown down before the door, a gray-headed old man, lame in one leg, presented himself, and asked if he might put the coal away in the cellar. His face was all begrimed, and his clothes black with coal dust. In one hand he held a shovel, and in the other a basket.

"How much do you charge?" I asked.

"A quarter dollar, ma'am," he replied, in a respectful tone, touching his hat as he spoke.

"Very well," I replied, "you may put it away." And I returned to my room, which looked out upon the street. On glancing out, as I seated myself by the window, I saw that the old man had a fellow-laborer, who looked as old, as poor, and as dirty as himself. The sight of these

two old men, toiling for their shilling a-piece, with their heavy baskets of coal, touched my feelings. I thought of my own grey-headed father, whom I loved with filial tenderness, and my imagination pictured him in the condition of the two men at work beneath my window. My heart turned from the picture with a shudder ; but I could not help looking down at the men, and the sight of them kept my thoughts busy.

“What a poor pittance it is that these men toil for,” I said to myself. “How eagerly they work, as if the reward of their labor was to be a hundred dollars, instead of the eighth of a single dollar a-piece. Ought I not,” I asked, as my feelings became more and more interested, “to pay them more than the price agreed upon?”

“But why do that?” I argued with myself, “twenty-five cents a ton is the regular price for putting away coal. No one expects more. That is their price, and they are satisfied with it.”

“That may be,” I reasoned in turn. “But why are they satisfied? Because they can get no more. Twenty-five cents a ton has been fixed as a fair compensation, and it is useless to ask more.”

“Well,” I opposed, “and why has this price

been settled on as a fair one? Simply, because it is really worth no more to perform the amount of labor required to put away a ton of coal. A man can do it alone in less than an hour, and twenty-five cents an hour is good wages for a laboring man. Working ten hours a day, he would earn two dollars and a half a day, or fifteen dollars a week."

"But," my benevolent feelings urged against this, "a coal man cannot, of course, get ten hours' work a day at putting in coal, or even five hours."

"How do you know that?" said prudence. "You don't know any thing about how much work he can get. A great many tons of coal are bought in a large city like this. No doubt these men make a great deal of money. They seem content enough with their wages, at least, and, of course, they are the best judges of its sufficiency."

"Well, perhaps it is all so," I returned, mentally, lifting my eyes as I spoke, and glancing at the two old men below, who had nearly finished their task. "But they don't look as if they earned five dollars a week, much less fifteen. A quarter between the two! Indeed it seems like too little. I really feel ashamed to offer it. How

many, many quarters, and halves, and dollars, do I spend in self-indulgence, while these poor old men have few of the comforts of life. And now I am arguing with myself against the justice of paying them a fairer compensation for their labor, than that for which I agreed. The fact is, we are very nice in our bargains with the poor, holding them strictly to the minimum of compensation, while upon ourselves we lavish all kinds of expensive indulgences. In the morning we will chaffer with a poor seamstress, cook, chambermaid, whitewasher or porter, about a sixpence—and in the afternoon spend ten or twenty dollars foolishly. A dollar thrown away upon self-indulgence, costs us not a pang. But sixpence more to a poor dependent, than just happens to suit our vacillating ideas of economy, gives us an hour's uneasiness and self-reproaches. The fact is, I'll give the old men a quarter a-piece. That is little enough."

To oppose this resolution, came the thought, that if I gave them more than they asked, I would do them really more harm than good. That the good which a shilling a-piece would do them, would be no kind of a compensation for the disappointment they would experience in not getting a



like advance at other places. The fact of having been better paid here than usual, would naturally lead them to think about increased pay elsewhere. They would no longer be content with the regular price. And to take content from the poor man, would be to do him the greatest possible harm.

While I thus thought, a domestic came into the room, to say that the coal was all in the cellar. For one moment I hesitated, and then handed over a single quarter of a dollar. As I did so, I felt a slight pang. The servant left the room, and I again glanced out of the window. The two old men were patiently awaiting the reward of their labor. Cool as the day was, their work had started the perspiration, and they stood with bared heads, wiping their soiled faces; their thin gray locks waving in the wind. My heart was touched at the sight, and I half uttered the name of my domestic aloud, under the impulse I felt to recall her, and double the coal men's compensation. But I restrained myself. In a few minutes it was too late to put my good intentions into practice.

I was not satisfied with myself. Try as I would, I could not drive from my mind the image of the old man who applied for the privilege of earning a shilling. To me an extra shilling would

have been of no consequence—to him it might have proved a blessing. I felt that I had been guilty of grinding the poor—not in thoughtless adoption of social customs, but deliberately and of set purpose. I had saved a quarter of a dollar, but at the expense of a troubled conscience. At last I succeeded in driving these unpleasant thoughts from my mind. Friends whom I loved came in, and in pleasant converse new images arose, and new affections came into play. One of those friends wore a neat ornament that pleased me very much. It cost three dollars. So well did it suit my fancy, that I commissioned my husband on the next morning to procure me a similar one. He did so. But before I had an opportunity to wear it in company, I was led once more to think of my old coal man.

Two or three mornings after that on which our ton of coal was bought, my eye lit upon a few brief paragraphs in the newspaper which evidently alluded to the lame old man who had excited my unfruitful sympathy. He was dead. A blood-vessel had been ruptured during a fit of coughing, and he had died of suffocation. The paragraph went on to state that he had left a wife and four little children who had been solely dependent upon his

daily labor for food. They were now in distress and destitution. He who had loved them had been suddenly removed from them. The fatherless and the widow were left in want and desolation. An earnest appeal to the sympathies of the public followed.

I threw the newspaper aside, put on my shawl and bonnet, took my purse from a drawer, and hurriedly left the house. A brisk walk of half an hour, brought me to a comfortless row of tenements near the suburbs. In an upper room of one of these, I found a middle-aged Irish woman in feeble health, with four children. A question or two brought out a gush of native pathos, that drew tears from my eyes. The style and eloquence of her lamentations for her lost "mon," showed her heart to be full of deep tenderness—and that her loss was truly irreparable. I found her very poor—actually in want of the most common necessities of life. To a question or two about her husband, she replied—

"Och, indade, ma'am, and my poor John was a hard working man, when he could get it to do, and didn't dhrink a dhróp. But he had been out of work nearly all summer—and hard enough has it been to get even praties for the childher. And

now, just as the coal time had come on, and he was beginning to get something to do, he has died—och hone!”

“How much could he make in this way?” I asked, after her new burst of grief had subsided.

“Never more than three or four dollars a week, unless sometimes when the gentlemen favored him, and gave him a little something more than the regular price for putting away their coal. But this was not often. Rich people don’t think much about our wants. They would make us work for them for nothing if we would do it. John often came home angry, because, he said, that even after he had earned his money, it was begrudged to him.”

The woman spoke with bitterness. I felt that there was too much truth in what she said—and that I was not altogether guiltless. I emptied my purse before leaving her meagerly furnished room, and went away, I trust, a wiser woman.

The question, as to the justice of our rates of compensation for certain services, is one that requires, I think, to be discussed anew, and settled upon a more liberal basis. We wish to get every thing done as low as possible, without regard to the value to us of the service, or the condition of

the one who serves. Indeed, the lower we perceive the individual to have fallen in external things, the smaller the compensation we feel disposed to offer him. Half dollars and dollars are not valued when some question of self-gratification comes up ; but how earnestly do we go to work often to get the porter's, the whitewasher's, or carpet shaker's services for a few pennies less than asked ? I am not at all guiltless in this matter. I wish I were. Let me make some more confessions. An open confession is said to be good for the soul.

Last spring it became necessary, as it does every spring, to clean house. Carpets had to be lifted and shaken, and walls whitewashed from garret to kitchen. An old black man, who had shaken my carpets every year, was sent for to perform his part of the service. When he came, I said, after showing him the carpet—

“ How much are you going to charge for these, Moses ? ”

“ What I have always charged you, ma'am—a quarter dollar a-piece.”

“ But I think that is too much, Moses. Here are six carpets to shake, and that is a very good job ; and, you know, I always get you to shake

my carpets. I am sure I could get it done for less. Indeed, I know I could ; for Mrs. Lively told me only yesterday that she never paid over eighteen and three-quarters."

Moses looked surprised, and, I thought, pained. This would have brought me back to my senses, had it not been instantly suggested that the change in his manner was the confusion resulting from my discovering of his having charged unjustly for his work heretofore.

"I will pay you the same as other people pay for shaking their carpets and no more," I now said, with decision in my tone.

"If I must, I suppose I must—but it is too little," was the reply.

The old man then took up the carpets with the help of an assistant, and carried them away. The cheerful air with which this had always been done heretofore was gone. The cause, I might easily have perceived, if I had been in a state of that true perception which is the result of an unselfish condition of mind. But I was not ; and attributed the change to the disappointment felt in not getting from me his exorbitant charge, as I was pleased to call it.

When the carpets were brought home, I paid

Moses one dollar and a'leven pence. He took the money in silence, and, bowing respectfully, withdrew. From the window I saw him pay his assistant thirty-seven and a half cents, or one third of the whole amount received.

"But this isn't enough," I could hear the assistant say. "I ought to have at least half-a-dollar."

"And I, be-right, ought to have had a dollar and a half," returned Moses. "But missus has got stingy. I never knowed her to do such a thing afore, as take a fip off of a poor old fellow, when she has got every thing full and plenty around her. I reckon she wouldn't like to shake one of them big heavy carpets herself for a quarter, or a dollar either. But she thinks three fips enough for a poor old nigger."

"They're all a stingy, mean set!" replied his companion, indignantly.

"No, not all," quickly interposed Moses. "Mrs. Clarke and Mrs. Mayberry paid the price without a word, and gave me some old clothes into the bargain. And so Mrs. Elmwood used to do; but those drunken fellows that have got to going about and shaking carpets for almost nothing, have been along, and she thinks because they will

work at any price for money to get drunk on, we charge too much when we only ask a living price. It's hard; but I suppose it can't be helped. I've got my rent to make up by Monday, or I wouldn't think much about it."

The two black men then went away, and left me to my own reflections, which were not of the most self-complacent kind. I had saved, it is true, thirty-seven and a half cents, but the possession of the sum I had contended for gave me no pleasure. I had not come by it justly. The meanness of the act I had been guilty of made my cheek burn with shame, while a sense of its injustice weighed heavily upon my conscience. In order to save thirty-seven and a half cents, I had actually been guilty of oppressing a poor negro. In a few days I required old Moses's services again. When I paid him, I took care to make up the deficiency.

This circumstance set me to reflecting, and the more I thought on the subject, the more fully was I satisfied that the rates of compensation to a large class of persons below us are too small. I am no political economist—I am only a woman, looking upon human life with a woman's eyes. I see a large class of persons who are compelled to forego



all the elegancies and even comforts of life, and who think themselves well off in procuring even things barely necessary to sustain existence. This class of persons render us many services, for which we pay them the lowest possible prices. No sooner do we come to treat with them, than shillings, sixpences, and even pennies, assume a new importance in our eyes. If betrayed by their importunity into paying a few coppers more than that for which we discover some other and poorer person would have done the same service, we allow ourselves to think that we have been cheated. No generous regard for the condition of the individual leads us to advance the low rate of compensation for which he is content, or rather compelled to labor. The penny saved, is, indeed, the penny gained to us, when it is pinched off of the meagre pay of the poor whitewasher or seamstress; and we value it as such—but the axiom has little weight when it is summoned to oppose some selfish indulgence where even dollars are concerned.

I do not think that such a want of regard to the condition of the poor who labor for us, can be right. I do not think we can, with a clear conscience, waste frivolously so much money as we

do, and yet systematically grind down the poor. Be rigidly exact with them in regard to pennies, while we waste dollars upon ourselves in the merest sensual indulgences, that tend in no way to elevate the thoughts or purify the affections.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE FISH-WOMAN.

NOT many days after I had been called upon to reprove myself a little severely for my conduct towards old Moses, it rained very heavily. The wind was from the northeast, and the air in consequence raw and cold. It so happened that there was nothing in the house for dinner. Some one would, of course, be compelled to go to market, and the market was a long distance away. Cook was not well,—I did not feel like going out myself and getting thoroughly drenched, as I most certainly would, if I ventured into the street. In this dilemma my ear caught the welcome cry of a fish-woman.

“The very thing!” I ejaculated, rising to my feet, and going to the window, upon which I tapped as she went by. It was raining in torrents. The clothes of the poor woman were completely saturated, and clung to her body as the wind swept heavily against her.

“Poor creature!” I ejaculated, with a feeling

of real sympathy. I knew something about her, for once she told me that she had five little children at home, for whose support she thus toiled about the street.

"This is a dreadful morning for you to be out," I said, on opening the door.

"It is, indeed, ma'am ; but I can't afford to lose the sales of even a single day. Here's a fine bunch of fish for you, ma'am," holding up, as she said this, a large string of rock fish.

"What is the price?" I asked.

"A quarter dollar a bunch, ma'am."

"What will you take for two bunches?" I asked, instantly forgetting all about her peculiar situation, in the desire to save a few pennies that arose in my mind.

The poor creature paused a moment, and stood thoughtful. I can see her now, with her pale, sober face, standing in the drenching storm, with the water dropping from her shapeless bonnet about her breast and shoulders, calculating the amount of reduction she could afford to make me on her goods.

"You shall have the two bunches," she at length said, "for forty-five cents. They cost me twenty cents a bunch ; but it's a dreadful morning,

and I don't feel very well. I want to get home as quick as I can."

"Very well," I returned, "I will take them."

I then retired from the door, and took from my purse half a dollar, which I gave to the cook, and told her to go to the door and get two bunches of fish.

"Here is a half dollar," I added. "*She will give you five cents change.*"

I had hardly uttered the last sentence before my conscience began to smite me. But I stifled its reproofs until it was too late. While yet debating whether I should generously pay the woman her own price, instead of taking from her one half of her meagre profits, the street door closed, and Jane came in with two handsome bunches of fish. As she handed me the change she said, holding up the purchase—

"They are cheap enough."

I did not reply. "*They are dear enough*"—would have sounded much pleasanter to my ears at that moment. How insignificant and unattractive did the small piece of money I held in my fingers look—and yet, to gain just that little piece of money, I had permitted myself to wrong a poor

fish-woman, who had five little children to provide with a home, food, and clothing.

"She shall have it again!" I said, laying the coin upon the mantel-piece. "The next time she comes round, if it is to-morrow, I will buy fish from her, and return her this five cent piece in addition."

This resolution quieted the murmurings of conscience. On the next morning I listened for an hour or two, but she did not come into the neighborhood. I was disappointed, for I felt anxious to make restitution. The next day, and the next passed, but the fish-woman did not appear. *I never saw her again.*

Several weeks afterwards I inquired of a woman who called at the door to sell something, if she knew any thing about her. My description was quickly recognized.

"Oh, yes," she said; "I know her very well. But she is dead now."

"Dead!" I exclaimed, in painful surprise.

"Yes, ma'am. Some weeks ago it rained very hard, and she was out in it nearly all day. She took a dreadful cold, got sick, and died in about ten days."

“And her children? What of them?” I asked.

“I took one of them, a little girl, into my own family, though it was large enough already, dear above knows! But I thought of my own children if I should be taken away, and that made me crowd and pinch a little for the child’s sake. The oldest has been put to a trade; one has been taken into another family; and the two youngest are in the alms house.”

“Not in the alms house!” I said, shocked at the closing sentence.

“Yes, ma’am. I’m sorry to have to say it—but two of the poor little things had to be sent there. No one that felt as if she would like to, was able to take them—for we poor bodies have always as many of our own as we can scratch for. Sometimes I think it is a blessing that even the poor house is provided, where they can at least have a home if we should be taken away. This is often better than being distributed about among families, where they are too often shamefully neglected, if not treated most cruelly. When I die, I want to take all mine with me. I do not think I could sleep quietly in my grave if any one were to abuse my children.”

The woman was much disturbed by these thoughts, and showed it very plainly. As I felt disposed to talk with her a little further, I asked her to come in, which she did. "How old is the child which you have taken?" I asked.

"About five years old," she replied.

"Is it well off for clothes?"

"No, ma'am, not very. None of our children are very well off in this respect. It takes so much to feed them, that we never have a great deal over for any thing else."

A thought came into my mind at the moment.

"How would you like to part with the child," I asked, "if I got a place for it in the — orphan asylum?"

"It would be so much better off there than I can make it, that I could not refuse to let it go, as much like one of my own as it begins already to seem," she replied.

"How many have you of your own?"

"Four."

"All young?"

"Yes, ma'am. The oldest is but seven years of age."

"Have you a husband?"



The woman was disturbed at this question. So much so, that I regretted having asked it. But she replied in a changed voice.

"Yes, ma'am. But he isn't much help to me. Like a great many other men, he drinks too much. If it wasn't for that, you wouldn't find me crying fish about the streets in the spring, and berries through the summer, to get bread for my children. He could support us all comfortably if he was only sober, for he has a good trade, and is a good workman. He used to earn ten, and sometimes twelve dollars a week."

"How much do you make towards supporting your family?" I asked.

"Nearly all they get to live on, and that isn't much," she said bitterly. "My husband sometimes pays the rent, and sometimes doesn't even do that. I have made as high as four or five dollars in a week—but oftener two or three is the most I get."

"How in the world can you support yourself and husband, and four children, on three dollars a week?"

"I have to do it," was her simple answer. "There are women who would be glad to get

three dollars a week. They would think themselves well off."

"But how do you live on so small a sum?"

"We have to deny ourselves almost every little comfort, and confine our wants down to the mere necessities of life. After those who can afford to pay good prices for their marketing have been supplied, we come in for a part of what remains. I often get meat enough for a few cents to last me several days. And the same way with vegetables. After the markets are over, the butchers and country people, whom we know, let us have lots of things for almost nothing, sooner than take them home. In this way we make our slender means go a great deal farther than they would if we had to pay the highest market price for every thing. But, it too often happens, that what we gain here, is lost in the eagerness we feel to sell whatever we have, especially when, from having walked and cried for a long time, we become much fatigued. Almost every one complains that we ask too much for our things, if we happen to be one or two cents above what somebody has paid in market—where there are almost as many different prices as there are persons who sell; and, in consequence,

almost every one tries to beat us down. It often happens, that after I have walked for four hours, and sold but very little, I have parted with my whole stock at cost to some two or three ladies who would not have bought from me at all, if they hadn't known that they were making good bargains out of me—and this, because I could not bear up any longer. I think it very hard, sometimes, when ladies, who have every thing in full and plenty, take off of me nearly all my profits, after I have toiled through the hot sun for hours, or shivered in the cold of winter. It is no doubt right enough for every one to be prudent, and buy things as low as possible, but it has never seemed to me quite just for a rich lady to beat down a poor fish-woman, or strawberry woman, a cent or two on a bunch or a basket, when that very cent made, perhaps, one-third or one-half of her profits.

“It was only yesterday that I stopped at a house to sell a bunch of fish. The lady took a fancy to a nice bunch of small rock, for which I asked her twenty cents. They had cost me just sixteen cents. ‘Won’t you take three fips?’ she asked. ‘That leaves me too small a profit, madam,’ I replied. ‘You want too much profit,’ she returned. ‘I saw just such a bunch of fish

in market yesterday for three fips.' 'Yes, but remember,' I replied, 'that here are the fish at your door. You neither have to send for them, nor bring them home yourself.' 'Oh, as to that,' she answered, 'I've got a waiter whose business it is to carry the marketing. It is all the same to me. So, if you expect to sell me your things, you must put them at market prices. I will give you three fips for that bunch of fish, and no more.' I had walked a great deal, and sold but little. I was tired and half sick with a dreadful headache. It was time for me to think about getting home. So I said—'Well, ma'am, I suppose you must take them, but it leaves me only a mere trifle for my profits.' A servant standing by took the fish, and the lady handed me a quarter, and held out her hand for the change. I first put into it a five cent piece. She continued holding it out, until I searched about in my pocket for a penny. This I next placed in her hand. 'So you've cheated me out of a quarter of a cent, at last,' she said, half laughing, and half in earnest. 'You are a sad rogue.' A little boy was standing by. 'Here, Charley,' she said to him, 'is a penny I have just saved. You can buy candy with it.'

"As I turned away from the door of the large,

beautiful house in which that lady lived, I felt something rising in my throat and choking me. I had bitter thoughts of all my kind. Happily, where I next stopped, I met with one more considerate. She bought two bunches of my fish, at my own price—spoke very kindly to me, and even went so far, seeing that I looked jaded out, to tell me to go down into her kitchen, and rest myself for a little while. Leaving my tub of fish in her yard, I accepted the kind offer. It so happened that the cook was making tea for some one in the house who was sick. The lady asked me if I would not like to have a cup. I said yes. For my head was aching badly, and I felt faint. And, besides, I had not tasted a cup of tea for several days. She poured it out for me with her own hands, and with her own hands brought it to me. I think I never tasted such a cup of tea in my life. It was like cordial. God bless her ! When I again went out upon the street, my headache was gone, and I felt as fresh as ever I did in my life. Before I stopped at this kind lady's house, I was so worn down, and out of heart, that I determined to go home, even though not more than half my fish were sold. But now I went

on cheerfully and with confidence. In an hour my tray was empty, and my fish sold at fair prices.

"You do not know, ma'am," continued the woman, "how much good a few kindly spoken words, that cost nothing, or a little generous regard for us, does our often discouraged hearts. But these we too rarely meet. Much oftener we are talked to harshly about our exorbitant prices—called a cheating set—or some other such name that does not sound very pleasant to our ears. That there are many among us who have no honesty, nor, indeed, any care about what is right, is too true. But all are not so. To judge us all, then, by the worst of our class, is not right. It would not be well for the world, if all were thus judged."

"Indeed, it would not," I said, almost involuntarily.

After offering the woman a few encouraging words, I gave her some clothes for the little girl she had taken, and promised to use my influence to get her into an asylum for orphans. This I readily accomplished; thus relieving her of a burden, and providing the child with a comfortable home. The two children who had been taken to

the alms house weighed upon my mind a good deal. I could not put the thought of them away until I had succeeded in getting them taken out, and placed in the care of two benevolent, kind-hearted women, who adopted them as their own

## CHAPTER IX.

## A NEW DOMESTIC.

JANE, who had never seemed happy after her cousin's return to the old country, gave me notice, about a year afterwards, that she was going to leave me. She, too, pined for home, and was going back. I was sorry to part with Jane. She had been a faithful domestic, and faithful domestics are not easily obtained; but I did not think it right to oppose her. We parted the best of friends. On the day she left me, a new cook entered my kitchen. I did not like her appearance much. I thought she seemed ill-tempered. Certainly, she was very silent, and, to judge from first appearances, quite stupid. I felt discouraged.

"Hannah," I said, on going into the kitchen, after breakfast, on the first day of her administration in culinary affairs,—“we will have dinner at two o'clock. I wish you to be very punctual. Mr. Elmwood is particular about having his meals precisely at the hour.”



To this Hannah made no reply, merely looking me in the face with a half intelligent stare.

"You understand me, Hannah," I said, a little sharply—for I felt annoyed at her seeming stupidity, or want of good manners.

"Yes, ma'am," she replied, in a low voice.

"Very well. Don't fail to do every thing in good time."

I then told her what we would have for dinner, and how I wished the different dishes cooked. During the morning, thoughts of my new cook troubled me a good deal. She was so different from Jane—at least from Jane when she left me. At first, even she did not know much about the duties she engaged herself to perform. Two or three times I went into the kitchen to see how things were progressing. But nothing was going on right. Hannah was slow, awkward, and untidy in her work. And I felt worried. When I spoke to her, it was in a pettish tone. Of this I was conscious, and, also, that it was wrong. But I had not that command of myself that would enable me to put down, by a decided effort, my wrong feelings. At one o'clock I found the preparations for dinner so much behindhand, that a late meal was inevitable.

"This won't do, Hannah," I said, suffering, in spite of my better sense, my feelings to betray themselves in my manner. "I explained to you this morning that dinner must be on the table precisely at two. But it will now be impossible to get it ready before half past two. This must never happen again."

Saying this in a decided, rebuking tone, and with a stern countenance, I turned away and left the kitchen. I felt angry with Hannah, and angry with myself because I was angry with her, and likewise because I had no better control of myself. While sitting in the parlor, in a very unhappy mood, the door bell rang. It was answered by Hannah, who brought me in a magazine for the month, that had just been delivered. I opened it carelessly, but was all attention in an instant, for the words—"Hiring a Servant"—met my eye as the caption of an article. After reading the first few lines, I lost all consciousness of my own peculiar troubles. When I had finished the story—for story it was—I was in a state of mind altogether different from the one I had a short time previously been indulging. I saw my duty, and, what was more, felt prepared to enter upon it in a right spirit. But, for the benefit of my fair country-

women, for whose instruction and improvement I am opening up my own faults, weaknesses, trials, and triumphs, I will here give the sketch that was so useful to me. May it be like bread cast upon the waters.

## HIRING A SERVANT.

“Well, I’ll just give up at once ; so there now ! It’s no use to try any longer !” said Mrs. Parry, passionately, as she came into the parlor where her husband sat reading, and threw herself upon the sofa.

“Why, what is the matter now, Cara ?” inquired Mr. Parry in a quiet tone, for he had seen like states of excitement so often that they had ceased to disturb him.

“The matter ? Why, a good deal ! Sally is going away day after to-morrow, and I shall be left without a cook again. And what shall I do then ? Can you tell me that ?”

“Hire another,” was the unmoved reply of Mr. Parry.

“Yes, it’s easy enough to say ‘hire another.’ but saying and doing are two things. I never expect to get another as good as Sally, and *she* has been troublesome enough, dear knows !”

Mr. Parry laid aside his newspaper, folded his hands together, and assuming a resigned attitude, looked his wife in the face, with an air of composure that annoyed her exceedingly.

“ You seem always to think this trouble about servants a very little matter,” she said, somewhat pettishly ; “ I only wish you had the trial of it for awhile !”

“ I have no desire, I can assure you, Cara,” he replied, in a soothing voice. “ I never envied you, or any other woman, the pleasures appertaining to household duties. But you must allow me to think that much of the difficulty and annoyance which is too frequently experienced, might be avoided.”

“ No doubt you think so. All men do. I verily believe there never was a man yet who possessed true sympathy for the peculiar trials incident to housekeeping.”

“ Come, come, Cara ! that is a sweeping declaration,” Mr. Parry replied, smiling. “ I, for one, think that I feel for you in all your various and conflicting duties, and were it in my power, would lighten every one of them. But, as I cannot do this, I cannot, of course, think that in entering into

them you do right to allow them to make you unhappy."

"It is easy enough to talk, Mr. Parry ; but how do you think that I or any other woman can look on unmoved, and see every thing in disorder ? If dinner is late, or badly cooked, you are very sure to speak about it ; and how do you think I can feel easy when I see that, through the inattention of the servant, such a thing is going to happen, or feel at all pleasant after it has happened ?"

This was carrying the truth right home ; and Mr. Parry remembered, all at once, that at sundry times he had grumbled because dinner was not on the table promptly ; and, on various occasions, because the meat was overdone or underdone, or the vegetables cold or badly cooked. He therefore sat very still, and did not reply. Mrs. Parry perceived the impression she had made, and continued :—

"Or, how do you think that I can feel otherwise than I do in prospect of just such things again, and a dozen others more annoying still ? I've had trouble enough with Sally, to get her to understand how things ought to be done, and it disheartens me outright now that she is determined to go away. I don't care so much for myself, but I know how these household irregularities annoy you, and that

you blame me for them, even though you don't say any thing."

Mr. Parry was silenced for the time. He saw that he was thrown completely "in the wrong," and that it would be useless to attempt then to argue himself out of his unenviable position. His wife, thus victorious, had the uninterrupted privilege for that day, at least, of being just as unhappy as she wished, in prospect of Sally's departure, and the annoyances that were to follow this event.

During that day and the next, a gloom pervaded the household of Mrs. Parry. Sally felt more than ever anxious to be away. Once or twice the idea of remaining passed through her mind; but a sight of Mrs. Parry's overcast countenance instantly dispelled it.

On the morning of the day on which Sally was to leave, an Irish girl, who had learned, through the chambermaid, that the cook was going away, applied for the situation.

"Are you a good cook?" inquired Mrs. Parry.

"O yes, ma'am; I can cook any thing."

"Where did you live last?"

"I am living in a tavern, ma'am."

"Why do you wish to leave there?"

"I don't like the place. You are so much exposed in a tavern."

"What is your name?"

"Margaret."

"Well, Margaret, you can come on trial to-morrow morning. Sally is going to stay to-night."

And so Margaret went away, promising to come back in the morning. At dinner time Mrs. Parry seemed a little more cheerful.

"I've engaged a cook," she said, after the meal was nearly over.

"Have you, indeed! Well, I'm glad of that, Cara. You see you've had all your trouble for nothing."

"I'm not sure of that," she replied. "It's one thing to hire a cook, and another thing to be pleased with her. She's an Irish girl, and you know that they are never very tidy about their work."

"But they are, usually, willing and teachable. Are they not?"

"Some of them are. But then, who wants the trouble of teaching every new servant her duty? It's enough to pay them their wages."

"Still, in thus teaching them we are doing good. And we should always be willing to take upon

ourselves a little trouble, if, in doing so, we can benefit another.'

"That would be too generous! I might, on your principle, be willing to do nothing else but teach ignorant servants their duty, and thus fit them to make other houses pleasant, instead of my own. For, it generally happens, that when you have made one of them worth having, she knows some one with whom she would rather live than with you. There was Nancy, that didn't know how to wash a dish, or cook a potato when I took her. She lived with us a year, until she could turn her hand to every thing, and then went to Mrs. Clayton's, where she has been for six years. Mrs. Clayton told me day before yesterday that she was the best woman she had ever had in the house, and that she would not part with her upon any consideration. And here is Sally, with whom I have had my own time. She's getting to be good for something, and now she's contented here no longer."

"That does seem a little hard, Cara. But, then, don't you feel a gratification in reflecting that, through your means, Mrs. Clayton has obtained a servant who fills her place so well as to give satisfaction to the family?"



"I can't say that I do," Mrs. Parry replied in a half positive, half hesitating tone.

"Then if you do not," her husband said, seriously, "it is time that you began, at least, to make the effort to feel thus. The reason that we are so often made unhappy by the actions of those around us, is, because we regard our own good and our own comfort of primary importance. Any thing that disturbs these, disturbs us. But, if we desired to impart benefits as well as to receive them, we should come, as a necessary consequence, into a state of mind that could not be easily agitated. We would see in the wrong actions and in the short-comings of others, that which affected them injuriously, as well as ourselves, and in trying to modify or correct them, we would have a reference to their good as well as to our own."

"That may all be true enough ; but I am sure that I could never act from such disinterested motives. It is not in me."

"It is not in any one, naturally, to act thus, Cara. But that is no reason why good principles may not be formed in us. You can at least see, I suppose, that, if all acted thus with reference to the good of others, every thing in society would move on much more pleasantly than it does."

“O yes, of course. But if only a few, why they might work their lives through for the good of others, and be no better off by it.”

“A selfish idea, I see, is uppermost in your mind, Cara,” her husband said kindly, and with an encouraging smile, for it was not often that he could get her to consent to talk rationally on such subjects. “The few who thus acted, would not have in their minds the idea of a reward. The delight which naturally springs up in the mind from the performance of good actions to others, would be to them a much higher gratification than any thing that could be given to them as an external reward for what they had done. Let me see if I cannot make this plain to your mind. Suppose Mrs. Clayton had so thoroughly educated an ignorant servant as to make her fully acquainted with all the household duties that might be required of her; and that after she was thus fitted for the performance of these duties, this servant left her, and finally came into your family. Do you not think that Mrs. Clayton might feel delight in the thought, that through her efforts to instruct that servant, she had acquired the ability of obtaining a comfortable home at any time, and you had the pleasure of having one in your family who lightened you of

many a care, and caused your household arrangements to move on harmoniously ?”

“Yes, I can see that she might. But I am not so sure that she would feel thus.”

“And you can see, no doubt, that to feel thus would be much better than to have none but purely selfish affections.”

“Yes, I can see that, too. And, farther, I should be very glad if I could have principles of action so elevated.”

“You may have them, Cara. We all may have them,” her husband said, earnestly and feelingly. “But then, it will be necessary for us to begin the correction in us of whatever is altogether of self; and to begin, too, in humble and little things. I must cease to complain, if every thing should not happen to be as orderly as I desire, and cease to do so, because I know that to complain thus will necessarily make you unhappy. I must not regard myself exclusively. And you, in reference to your servants, should regard them and their good, as well as the perfect order of your household arrangements. Under such a system, if carefully carried out, *with the heart in it*, a wonderful change would occur. In case things went wrong—and perfection cannot be attained in any thing

here—you would cease to feel annoyed and dispirited as you now often do. The higher and more unselfish motives from which you acted, would superinduce a condition of mind not easy to be disturbed.”

“I fear, husband, that I have defects of character which will prevent my ever acting thus,” Mrs. Parry said, in a tone slightly desponding.

“A consciousness of your weakness, my dear Cara, should make you doubly watchful. The end to be gained is worth years of trial. If you can only gain your own consent to commence the work of reformation from principle, you will soon begin to perceive its peaceable fruits, and thus find ample encouragement for perseverance.”

“I can at least *try*, husband,” she said, looking up into his face with an expression of calm determination. “But,” and her countenance changed, and assumed a look of dispondency, “how shall I begin?—that is the puzzling question.”

“To begin aright is almost half the victory. And here I must confess that I hardly know how to give advice. But perhaps I can suggest a thought or two that will help you. This new cook who is coming, you say, is an Irish girl. It is not probable that, in the outset, she will be

at all capable of doing her work as you wish it done. Make up your mind to this, resolving, at the same time, that you will be kind and forbearing towards her. That no matter how awkward she may be, or how ignorant, that you will not exhibit in her presence any thing like impatience. Think of her, too, as a poor girl, who has had few opportunities, and who is now in a strange country, and, perhaps, altogether friendless. Your kind feelings will then be drawn out towards her, and it is impossible for you to feel kindness and concern for her without its being perceived. The Irish character, you know, is grateful. From the awakening up in her mind of affection towards you, she will be doubly anxious to serve and to please you. Thus a life will be put into all her actions. Under such an impulse she will learn quicker and remember better all you wish her to do, than she possibly could if she were acted upon by less elevated motives."

"I see and feel the force of what you say," Mrs. Parry replied, in a subdued tone, "and will, at least, try to put in practice the hints you have given me."

On the next morning, after breakfast, Margaret came, and Sally went away, leaving the kitchen

in her charge. For a little while after Sally had left, Mrs. Parry permitted herself to feel discouraged; but from this state of mind she soon roused herself, and went out into the kitchen to instruct Margaret in her duties. It first occurred to her, after she had gone in where the girl was, that she ought to do something to make her feel easy and at home. The wish to do this was soon followed by an idea of how it might be done. So she said—

“Come, Margaret, bring your box up stairs, and I will show you your room.”

So Margaret lifted her box, which she had set down in one corner of the kitchen, and followed Mrs. Parry up into one of the garret rooms, which was plastered, and had but a few days before received a fresh coat of whitewash.

“This is the room, Margaret, in which you, with the chambermaid, will sleep. She will keep it in order, of course; your duties will lie in the kitchen. You will find her very kind, and you must try and live on good terms with each other.”

“It shan’t be my fault, ma’am, if we don’t,” Margaret said, warmly, for she felt Mrs. Parry’s kind manner, and was instantly drawn towards her.

“You say that you understand how to cook

almost any thing," Mrs. Parry remarked, after they had returned to the kitchen.

Margaret hesitated a moment, while the color rose to her face. At length she said, with a good deal of feeling in her tone of voice—

"I wouldn't deceive you for the world, ma'am, now you seem so kind to me. I am not a very good cook, for I never had much chance; but then, ma'am, I am anxious to learn."

"But, didn't you tell me, Margaret, that you could cook any thing?" Mrs. Parry asked in an altered tone.

"O yes, indeed, ma'am, and so I did. But then what could I do? If I had said I wasn't a good cook, you wouldn't have taken me; and so I'd a had no chance to learn at all. But indeed, ma'am, I'll try to do right, and if trying 'll do any good, I am sure I will please you."

Mrs. Parry hesitated. She hardly knew what to do or say. There was something in Margaret's present frankness and apparent sincerity that she liked; but this was counterbalanced by a direct, premeditated falsehood, and an intention to deceive. After pausing for a few moments, she said—

"Well Margaret, I cannot say that I like your

attempt to deceive me, but now you are here, I will at least give you a trial."

"Indeed, ma'am, it was necessity entirely that made me do it; but I knew that if I tried I could learn, and I thought, surely the mistress will have patience with me when I am willing!"

This modified Mrs. Parry considerably; and feeling, from having at first almost compelled herself to take an interest in the poor Irish girl, some touches of real concern for her, she said—

"If you are really willing to learn and anxious to please, Margaret, I have no objection to taking some pains to instruct you. But then I shall want you to pay attention to what I tell you, so that after I have once given you a plain direction, you will not discourage me by forgetting it, when you come to do the thing over again."

Margaret promised faithfully to do the best she could, and then set about her work. Heretofore, on hiring a new cook, Mrs. Parry had installed her into the kitchen, and then left her to go about things in her own way, under all the disadvantages of being in a strange place, unacquainted with the economical arrangements of the family. Of course, no one ever suited her at first, and it was usually some weeks before things got into regular going



order. In the present instance, however, she felt that there was a positive necessity for her to plan and arrange all the work there. She found Margaret really ignorant of the very first principles of her assumed calling. But she was so willing, active, and good tempered, that she could not get out of humor with her, though several times during the morning she was sorely tempted. Dinner was ready at the hour, and well cooked, too, for it had all been timed and performed under Mrs. Parry's own direction; and she well knew how to do it.

"Your dinner is in good time, and in good order," Mr. Parry remarked, after sitting down to the table; "and you don't seem to look worried, though a little warm, as if you had been pretty busy. I hope your new cook has proved herself better than you had anticipated that she would be."

"She has proved to be quite deficient in every thing," Mrs. Parry replied.

"Indeed! I am sorry to hear that. I thought she recommended herself highly."

"So she did. But she confessed to me this morning, that she did so to secure the place, hoping to learn afterwards."

"That is a bad sign. I suppose you do not intend keeping her."

"Well, as to that, she seems so anxious to learn, and, withal, so willing and good tempered, that I feel very much disposed to take some trouble with her. I have been in the kitchen most of the morning, and, indeed, cooked the dinner pretty nearly myself. I see much in her to like, though a good deal that tries my patience. I must confess, that so decided an untruth as she told me prejudices me against her. Still, much allowance should be made for a defective education, and the disadvantages under which she found herself placed."

"That is sensible and kind, Cara," her husband replied, evidently pleased at finding his wife so readily making the effort to act from motives less selfish than those which had too uniformly governed her in matters relating to her domestics, "and I have no idea that your labor will be thrown away."

"I feel somehow or other that it will not be thrown away," Mrs. Parry said; "and I feel, that my mind is much calmer and more encouraged than it would have been if I had left her alone in the kitchen, with the determination to send her

away if she were not able to do things to my liking."

"You are getting hold of the true philosophy, Cara," said her husband, with an encouraging smile. "We never cultivate good feelings towards others, or make an effort towards being kind to them, that we have not a reward in a composed state of mind more than compensating for the self-denial or trouble it may have cost us."

"The truth of what you say is not only apparent to me, but I can realize it from having felt it," was Mr. Parry's reply.

That evening, a Mrs. Coster, one of her friends, came in to spend an hour or two. Their conversation, by a natural transition, passed to the subject of servants.

"I am almost out of all heart," Mrs. Coster said, with a sigh, as soon as the topic was introduced. "Indeed, I've given up all hope of ever having any peace again while I am in the power of so unprincipled a class as domestics. Is it not too bad, that the happiness of a whole family must be interrupted by a cook, or a chambermaid? It makes me feel downright angry whenever I think about it. I see it as clear as can be that we shall have to break up and go to boarding."

“That would be exchanging one evil for a dozen,” remarked Mrs. Parry.

“So I used to think,” Mrs. Coster replied. “But, really, I have been forced to change my mind. Every day the trouble with servants is increased. If you get one that is worth having, she will be off at the end of two or three months; and nine out of ten I wouldn’t give house room. They are, in fact, not worth the powder it would take to shoot them! But how are you off in this respect, Mrs. Parry?”

“Well, I have my own troubles, Mrs. Coster. Sally, who has been with me a good while, left me this morning, and I’ve got a raw Irish girl in the kitchen, who couldn’t cook a dinner in a decent way to save her life.”

“O dear!” ejaculated Mrs. Coster, clasping her hands together, and rolling up her eyes. “Then you have got your hands full. I had a trial of one of your raw Irish girls once, and a pretty piece of baggage she was. I left her to cook the dinner on the first day—and such a dinner! But I will not make the effort to give you an idea of it, or the dozen other things she *attempted* to do. I never want to hear of raw Irish girls again since I had a trial of Margaret Coyle.”

"Margaret Coyle!" Mrs. Parry said, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, Margaret Coyle; and I hope in mercy, it isn't her that you've got."

"Yes, it is no other than her," Mrs. Parry replied, despondingly.

"O dear! O dear! 'Then you've got your hands full! Why, unless she has changed a good deal since I had her, she is not able to do a single thing as it ought to be done. And, besides, she is slovenly and dirty. You'd better send her off at once, for you'll never make any thing out of her."

"She seems at least willing, and good tempered," urged Mrs. Parry, in her favor.

"Not by any means. I found her dilatory and unmanageable; and she is the only servant who ever gave me a saucy word."

"Ah me!" sighed Mrs. Parry, "It's a hard case, truly! Why can't domestics feel some sense of justice towards the families in which they reside?"

"Because they are a low, unprincipled set!" Mrs. Coster replied, warmly; "and I don't know that we ever need expect much more from them. They're generally envious of their mistresses, and ashamed of the idea of being servants, and think,

in consequence, that it shows a spirit of independence, to be saucy and disregardful of the comfort of the families in which they reside."

After Mrs. Coster went away, Mrs. Parry seemed very much dispirited, and remarked to her husband, that she was afraid all her hope of making any thing out of Margaret was vain.

"That may be," Mr. Parry remarked. "But it does not at all follow, it seems to me, from what Mrs. Coster has said. I am confident that she never gave Margaret a fair trial. And I am farther inclined to think, that she worried the poor girl until she was roused, and answered her back in a spirit of offended pride."

"Yes, that may be very true. I never thought that Mrs. Coster had much feeling for her domestics. She expects them to do just so, and never spares them if there is any deviation from her rules. Nor does she think it required of her to consider them at all, except as necessary appendages to her family."

"That is the great error," Mr. Parry replied. "So long as the majority of people look upon domestics as necessary evils, so long will the majority of people find it hard work to get along with them. Nor is this kind of trouble confined

altogether to the one party in the case. The servant has as hard, and usually, a much harder time of it than the mistress. She is expected to do every thing for the comfort of the family, and yet is to be considered no farther than as entitled to her regular monthly hire. Too often, she is made to bear all the surplus ill-humor of the woman in whose service she is engaged ; and, as a general rule, is too often a stranger to all kindness and consideration. This is speaking with a good deal of seeming latitude ; and yet, Cara, you will admit that there is too much truth in what I have said."

"I cannot deny it," Mrs. Parry replied, seriously, "nor can I get away from the conviction, that I am far from being innocent in the matter myself. We are apt to take it for granted that those under us are also below us in feeling ;—that they are not entitled to the same consideration that those are whose condition in life is equal or superior to our own."

"That, certainly, is a great fault. It may often happen, too, that the poor girl who is forced to go into the kitchen, is one, the promise of whose early years was far superior to that of the individual for whom she is compelled to labor. And she may, also, have as acute feelings, and be possessed of as

sound moral principles. But who considers her in this light ?”

The conversation thus commenced, continued for some time ; but we will not weary the reader by repeating it farther ; enough has been given to show the principles it involved.

During the next morning, Mrs. Parry gave up her time to Margaret, and endeavoured, in a kind manner, to instruct her in the duties she had assumed. The poor girl seemed very anxious to learn, and evinced a quickness of apprehension that disappointed Mrs. Parry agreeably. To see how far she recollected the directions given on the day previous, the same kind of a dinner was prepared. Margaret was at fault but once or twice, and when the omission was pointed out, she said she would try and never forget that again ; and said it so earnestly, that it was evident she would be likely to keep the thing in her memory. Much to the surprise and pleasure of Mrs. Parry, in the course of a week, Margaret could get along very well in the kitchen, carefully continuing to do every thing in the exact way she had been told that it ought to be done. Sometimes, when Mrs. Parry was in a less calm and pleasant state of mind than usual, and any thing would go wrong, or Margaret would



forget some particular direction, she would speak to her in a voice less kind than she had from the first assumed when addressing her. Whenever this happened, the poor girl would look up into her face with an appealing expression, and sometimes the moisture could be seen gathering in her eyes. Mrs. Parry always felt this, and it enabled her to correct in herself an habitual petulance when any thing occurred to disturb her. The improvement manifest in Margaret continued, and at the end of the first month, Mrs. Parry was better pleased with her than with any one she had ever had. From an uniform, kind consideration, she had come to feel an interest in her, and one day asked her why she had left her native home. The question seemed to excite some painful emotions in the mind of the Irish girl, but she replied, readily and respectfully :

“ Misfortunes, ma’am. When my father and mother died, and the landlord rented our cottage and acre of ground to another family, me and the two little children were turned out, to do the best we could. We had always had a plenty of good potatoes, and milk, and oatmeal bread, and we were as happy as the greatest in the land. But now the

hardships came. I didn't mind myself so much, for I was most grown up, and could do pretty well ; but it made my heart ache to see little Jamie and Catherine turned on the parish, with no one to be kind and good to them as I had been. Poor things ! It was hard fare and cruel treatment they had. And I could do nothing for them, though I am sure, if my heart's blood could have done them any good, they should have had it. Little Catherine didn't stand it more than a year. It was wrong, maybe, but I did feel glad when she died. O, ma'am, if you had seen her when she was laid out for a little while before they boxed her up with rough boards, and put her down in the ground, without a priest or a word of prayer over her, it would have made your heart ache, I am sure, as it did mine. Before she went into the poor house, she was fat and round as your little George is now ; but when she died, she was all skin and bone, and her eyes were sunk 'way down in her head. And when little Jamie was let come and see her, before she was buried, he looked so pale and thin, and full of sorrow, that it broke me down entirely. O, ma'am, you don't know what it is to see those you love as dearly as you love your life, suffering and dying before you.

and yet have no power to help them.” The girl paused a moment or two to recover herself, and then continued,

“ Well, Jamie, he didn’t last long. He died as Catherine had, from want of good food and kind treatment. I saw the last of him, too, and then it seemed as if a great load had been taken off my heart. I knew they had both gone where they would be happy. Some time after this my brother, who had been in this country a few years, sent me over some money, and asked me to join him, saying that he would take care of me. I came out of course. But, ma’am, when I got here, he had died with the fever. I felt like I should have to give up. I was in a strange country, and among strangers. But they told me at the tavern where I was, that if I would turn to as chambermaid, they would give me four dollars a month. I was glad enough to do so. But I did not like it much, especially when I got acquainted with one or two girls, who were employed in families, and who said it was so much pleasanter there. I didn’t like the exposure of a tavern, and wanted badly to get into the quiet of a private house. At last, one of my acquaintances told me she could get me a place as cook. ‘ But I didn’t know how to cook,’ I told her. ‘ O, never

mind that,' she said ; ' tell the woman you can cook every thing, or she won't have you ; and you can easily learn after you once get the place. So I did as I was told. The woman wasn't kind and good to me as you have been, ma'am. She gave me things, and told me to get dinner ; I made bad work of it, of course. And then she got angry, and called me ugly names. O, it made me feel so bad ! From asking a little, as far as I could venture, and taking notice why she found fault, I tried to get as near right as I could. But it was no use. I was ignorant, and she did not seem to have any feeling for me. I staid only a week or two, when she got angry with me for doing something wrong, and said very hard words to me. I couldn't stand it any longer, ma'am, and so talked back to her. This made her a great deal worse, and I thought I had better leave and go back to the tavern, and so I did. After a while I heard that you wanted some one, and I told you, because I was persuaded to, the same story about my knowing how to cook every thing. You know the rest, ma'am. I think I improve some, don't I ?" she added, innocently.

" O yes, Margaret," replied Mrs. Parry, " you have improved very much ; and if you continue to improve, and are as willing and good tempered

as you have been, I think there will be no need of our parting soon. But was not that Mrs. Coster with whom you lived?"

"Indeed ma'am, and it was!" Margaret said, looking up with surprise.

"I know her very well, Margaret, and she is, in many things, a kind-hearted woman. But she is sometimes thoughtless. She, I suppose, expected to find in you what she wanted, a good cook, and was very much disappointed, and consequently, out of patience, when she found that you could do nothing that you had engaged to do."

Here the conversation ended between Mrs. Parry and her new cook, for whom, after hearing her brief history, she felt added kindness, and also an increased degree of confidence in her. Nor was she disappointed. From, apparently, the most unpromising materials, she came into the possession of a domestic, through kindness and consideration for her, who was ever faithful, and thence invaluable. And even more than this—she had been led to see in herself and correct it, that which, while it influenced her, would have made it impossible even to retain, for any length of time, a good servant. That particular disposition

was, a habit of petulance and fault-finding, when things were a little wrong. Nothing so discourages a domestic, as the clouded brow of her mistress. If there is sunshine, she will go about her duties with cheerfulness and perform every thing quicker and better. But the great prerequisite in the mistress of a family, is that calm, dignified and uniform consistency of conduct which commands involuntary respect. There are within the circle of almost every woman's acquaintance, some who are never troubled with domestics. All about them seem to be in the cheerful performance of every duty. Let the manner of one of these towards her servants be observed. She is never heard to speak to them in a tone of command, and often, in giving directions, she will be heard to say in a mild tone, "Nancy, I wish you," to do so and so; or, "Will you" do this or that thing. And yet, no one hesitates or uses improper familiarities towards her. She has no better materials to act upon than others, but she moulds and fashions them in a different way. On no occasion does she get excited, and say unreasonable things to them; for this would destroy in their minds all respect for her; as it always does in every instance where such a bad habit is indulged in. But

we will not tire our lady readers by lecturing them upon their domestic duties. We are sure that they have their own troubles in this respect. Nor will we presume to condemn any who cannot come up to the standard we have attempted to raise ; but, if they will only try to do so, and carefully look within, rather than without, for difficulties and hindrances, we are sure that some of them will be able to get along with that troublesome class of people called helps, domestics, or servants, as fashion or prejudice decides, much better than heretofore.

When I laid aside the magazine, far different feelings were active than when I took it up. My anger had passed away. I stood on a different position-point, and saw, of course, all things around me in different relations. At that moment the time-piece on the mantel struck the half-hour. I got up, and went calmly into the kitchen. Hannah looked earnestly into my face as I entered. I understood the reason of this. She had felt my harsh, dissatisfied manner towards her, and it had made her unhappy.

“Hannah,” I said, in a mild, encouraging voice, as soon as I had ascertained, which I did in a moment

or two, the exact state of progress that had been made in the preparation of dinner, "let me assist you in getting this meal ready. I don't think you understand my stove yet, for your fire does not seem lively."

As I said this, I took up the poker and cleared the fire of an accumulation of ashes, examined the dampers, and found that they were all wrong; re-arranged the dishes that were cooking, so as to bring them into more advantageous positions, and then showed Hannah what I had done, explaining to her, in a kind, familiar way, the whole action of the cook-stove. The effect of this surprised me. The dull, awkward girl, brightened up, and showed a degree of intelligence that I had not supposed she possessed. By remaining with her, and instructing her in a kind way, I was enabled to have dinner on the table, well cooked, by a quarter past two o'clock—and it so happened that my husband did not come in until just at that time.

Encouraged by the good effects produced by my change of manner towards the new cook, I went frequently into the kitchen for the next three or four days, and found Hannah a very different kind of a person from what I had supposed. She was a little awkward, it is true, but this arose from



the fact that she had never been properly instructed in any thing. She had been left to find out nearly all her duties, and to do them according to her own intelligence. But when I showed her a better way, she was thankful, and at once adopted it.

Thus I continued for some time, until I had trained her quite to my liking. The consequence is, that now I have a domestic who is to me almost invaluable. Hannah is clean, tidy, and industrious, and always to the minute with her meals. Had I not adopted the judicious course that proved so successful, I should not have made any thing out of her, for she will not bear harsh treatment. It wounds her feelings, confuses her mind, and excites her to opposition. But kindness softens her, as wax is softened before a gentle heat.

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But enough for the present. I throw these few leaves, upon which are written some brief passages of my own experience in domestic life, upon the waves, trusting that they may do good—that my countrywomen may gather from them hints to make both themselves and all who look up to them happier. The power to do good, every one possesses. If we cannot reform the world in a moment, we can begin the work by reforming ourselves

and our households, and thus plant the seeds that will in time produce a sure harvest. Who will not enter at once upon this work? It is woman's mission. Let her not look away from her own little family circle for the means of producing moral and social reforms, but begin at home; and the little leaven she there hides, will, in due time, thoroughly leaven her three measures of meal.

**THE END.**





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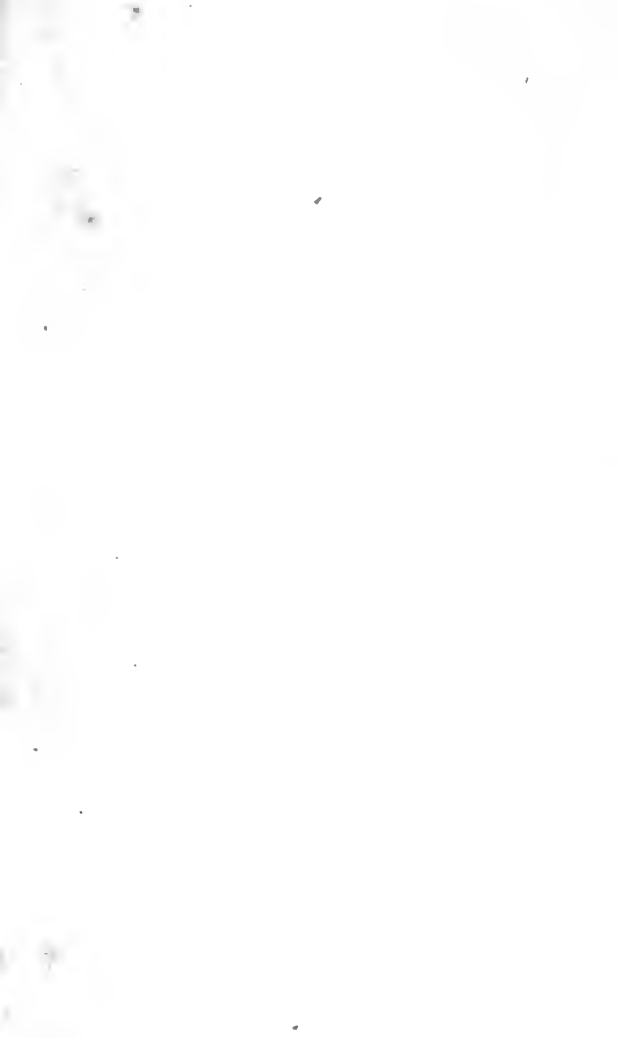
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